

LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB 60TH ANNIVERSARY JOURNAL 1993



**60 Years of the Lomond Mountaineering Club
1932 – 1992**

Compiled and Edited by Richard A. Napier

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including:

A History of the Club 1932-1992,

Articles from past Lomond Club Journals (1944-1957),

Extracts from Club Log Books 1975-1993

and

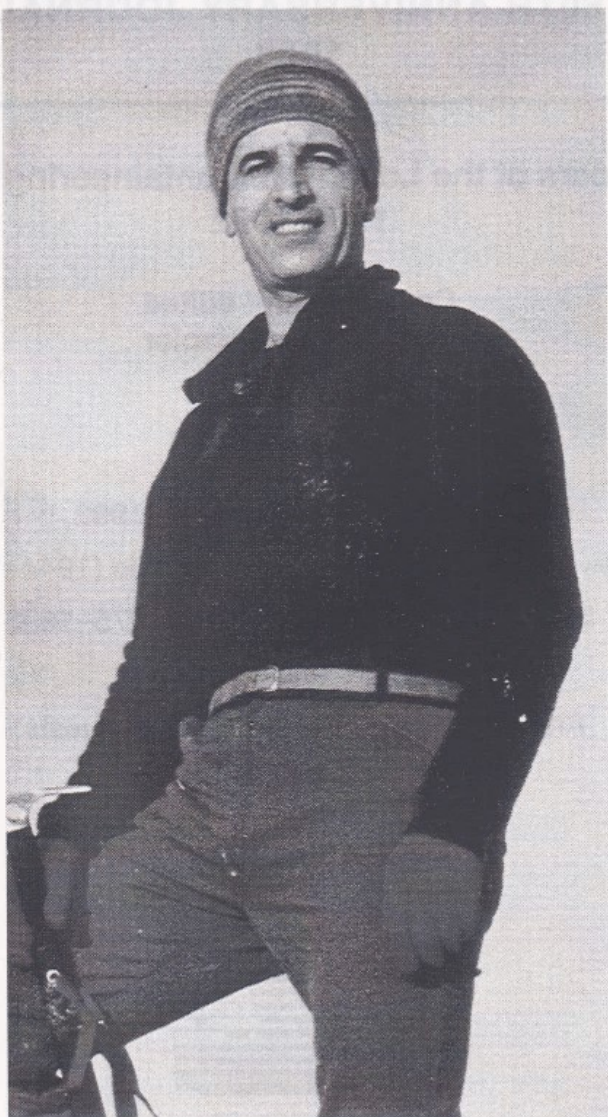
Articles by current members and guests.



LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB GLASGOW

**This Journal is
dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Nabaz Malaly**

**a well loved Club member who died after falling from
Green Gully on Ben Nevis on 18th April 1993**



**DR. NABAZ MALALY
1952-1993**

Shortly before this Journal went to press the Club was greatly saddened by Nabaz's death. He died young with so much to look forward to, but having done so much in his life that others would be proud of.

Born in Iraqi Kurdistan, he loved sports and nature and as a young man walked far and wide in the mountains of Kurdistan. In the 1970's Nabaz fought with other volunteers in the Kurdish liberation movement in their revolution against the tyrant Saddam Hussein to stop the genocide and oppression of the Kurdish people. He had been a dedicated and courageous Peshmerga (freedom fighter) and as leader he risked his own life in dangerous assignments for the Kurdish cause and would always do without himself rather than see his friends in need.

Nabaz refused to serve in Saddam's army in the war against Iran, and soon had to leave his Kurdish homeland behind. A keen climber, he joined the Lomond Club in the early 80's and made many friends here. He climbed extensively and in 1988 achieved his goal of raising the Kurdish flag on a Himalayan summit when he trekked and climbed in the Karakoram. He believed that by climbing high he could convey the suffering of his Kurdish nation closer to the Heavens, in the hope that one day justice and peace would be bestowed on them from above.

Nabaz was a brave and keen individual and kindly to others. The games we climbers play, our personal goals, and the dangers we put ourselves in, seem selfish and pointless in comparison to the selfless good Nabaz had done for his people and the generous spirit he had shown to the Club and others. Despite the tragic accident, Nabaz would not have wanted any of us to change our attitudes to mountaineering. He lived for the mountains, the freedom they symbolise, and the friendship that climbing engenders. The mountains took him from his family, and from us, but we will not be sad forever, but remember Nabaz's strength of character. So we will be strong in his passing, strong for his bereaved family, and for ourselves. We will remember him for his courageous spirit and be encouraged by his example of goodwill towards others.

Some of us will have known him well, others less than we'd have liked, but we will all miss him and remember him.

He leaves a wife, Joy and three children, and our sympathies are with them and Nabaz's other relatives.

"Our cairns for the bairns of the future may last
As signs of the climbs of our day;
But we hear the cheer of our friends of the past
In the dark, as a mark for our way."

Geoffrey Winthrop Young
(from 'The Pen-Y-Pass Song')

Front cover photo: Chris Roper on Diagonal Gully (III), Winter Corrie, Glen Clova, February 1991. Photo: Geoff Emerson.

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Johnnie Harvey, founder of the Lomond Mountaineering Club and President of the Club from 1932–1962.

Pictured here at Christmas 1953.

Photo: Maisie Haining.

CONTENTS

NOTE: All articles with a date in brackets are reproduced from past LMC Journals, other Club records or previously unpublished or published material.

		Page
FOREWORD	Chris Roper	7
INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	Richard A. Napier	8-10
THE LATE JOHNNIE HARVEY A tribute to the Founder of the Club	Lawrence Travers	11
LIST OF CLUB PRESIDENTS		12
A HISTORY OF THE CLUB: 60 Years of the Lomond Mountaineering Club 1932-1992	Richard A. Napier	13
IN RETROSPECT (1946) The dosses and howffs of the late 1920s and early 1930s	Bill Walker	66
NOT SO FAR AWAY PLACES (1957) More reflections on the 1930s era	Calum Finlayson	67
TOWER RIDGE: 5TH APRIL, 1936 (1945) From A Diary	John B. Nimlin	68
THE LEGEND OF CHARLIE FLEE-ON McATEER AND DANNY LONE-CYCLIST McGOV (1939) A tale of the famous Lomond Club bus	Bill Wassell	70
THE DRYMEN SONNET (1940) A poem	Davey Clark	71
CLUB MEETS DURING THE WAR: 1943-45 Extracts from the Club Journals (1944-45)		72
THE FIRST BUS RUN (1945) On the Buachaille at the end of the War	Flo Grant	76
RETURN TO THE HILLS (1945) The joy of the hills after the War	Sam Drysdale	77
PIONEERING ROUTES (1945) The satisfaction of first ascents	John B. Nimlin	78
THE CHASM (1946) Early repeat ascent of Clachaig Gully in Glen Coe	Willie Russell	78
FORBIDDEN ISLAND (1948) Climbing on Rhum in 1946	John B. Nimlin	80
IRELAND (1948) A first ascent in the McGillicuddy's Reeks	Johnnie Harvey	83
ONE FOR THE BOOK (1949) Climbing Waterpipe Gully on Skye	Jim Allison	84
THE COLUMBIA ICEFIELD (1949) and with THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA (1952) Explorations in the Canadian Rockies	Joe Hutton	85-88

CONTENTS**Continued from Page 5****Page**

ZINAL ROTHORN (1956) An Alpine route	Robbie Hutchieson	90
THE BUREAUCRAT AND THE MOUNTAINEER (1950) Access issues etc in 1950	Peter McGeoch	92
A PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORK OF THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND by its current President	Bob Reid	94
WHAT HAVE THE VIKINGS EVER DONE FOR US? MCofS issues, by its current National Officer	Kevin Howett	96
THE BALLAD OF CHILDE CHRISTIE (1976) A poem	Ian Spring	98
ROCK CLIMBING FOR BEGINNERS (1978) An instructive cartoon	Douglas Benn	99
ON BEN NEVIS (1979) A poem	Douglas Benn	105
EXTRACTS FROM THE CLUB LOG BOOKS 1975-1993		105
THE CLEARANCES 3rd ascent of this Glen Coe route in 1976	Ken Johnstone	119
THE WHITE HORSE INN A doss at Crianlarich	Lawrence Travers	120
RELAXING HOLIDAYS Epic routes in the Alps	Ken Johnstone	123
CAIRNGORM DAYS Sun, rock...	Richard Blackmore	125
BUDDING LADY CLIMBERS A cartoon	Susan Ann Wood	129
NOVICE NO MORE A poem	Susan Ann Wood	130
MOST OF THE DAY A Poem	John Stevenson	131
PERFECT PARALLELS Ski - touring in Austria	Elvyn Haigh	133
GREEN FIELDS A poem	Martin Collins	137
TWO DAYS LAST SUMMER On the Brenva Spur of Mount Blanc	Ken Coates	138
THE OFF- WIDTH VIEW Cartoons	Garry Thomas	142
IN PRAISE OF FAILURE Ethical ponderings	Richard Blackmore	144

FOREWORD

by CHRIS ROPER

(LMC President during 60th Anniversary Year, 1992)

The first 60 years of the Lomond Mountaineering Club has been a productive time in many ways. Last year the committee at the time felt that this achievement should be celebrated by a 60th Anniversary Dinner and the production of a journal to mark the occasion.

Why 60, you may ask? The ideal opportunity for a 50th anniversary year celebration was missed in 1982, so the committee felt that it was time some record should be made of the exploits of the previous generations of LMC members by way of recognition for founding the Club and continuing it and supporting it over the years.

It was great to see such a good response from the past members at the 60th Dinner last year, and for the Club to give them the chance to renew old friendships and to meet the newer generation of members in the Club today.

It only leaves me to thank Richard Napier and all the people who have contributed to the Journal through their time, their articles and the photographs.

I hope you all enjoy this Journal and help make it as great a success as the first 60 years of the Lomond Club.

Chris Roper, March 1993

INTRODUCTION

This special 60th Anniversary Journal is the first the Club has issued since 1957. Until now there has not been sufficient material or occasion to justify one.

Well, we have now reached that occasion - 60 years of the Club - and it is heartening to know that such things are feasible. We are grateful to those who have contributed articles on recent activities to help spread the balance of content. As well as the old Journals too, the Club is fortunate in having a considerable amount of other historical records and information which provided a valuable source for the preparation of this Journal.

The theme of this Journal, therefore, is to give a flavour of the activities of the Club and its members over the whole 60 years. This is done by a collection of articles selected from past LMC Journals together with extracts from the log books and other Club records, followed by articles written specially for this issue by current members; and we invited Bob Reid and Kevin Howett of the MCofS to contribute also. The whole lot are put in context first by a comprehensive history of the Club.

In compiling the history at first, it was apparent that many of the articles and notes were worth reproducing on their own. So this Journal has become a mini anthology of Lomond Club stories - a fitting way to celebrate 60 years of mountaineering. The chronological mix tells a collective story of its own. It is hoped the articles presented do give a flavour of the Club's mountaineering activities over its 60 years so far, and give a hint of that spirit which has made, and which continues to make, the Lomond Mountaineering Club what it was and still is.

We begin, therefore, with Lawrie Travers' moving tribute to the **late Johnnie Harvey**, the Club's founder-President. This is followed by a **History of the Club** which relates the principal events in the Club's 60 years both on and off the mountains, compiled by Richard Napier with considerable help and advice from several past and present members. Notes about members' first ascents are spread liberally throughout the history as a constant illustration of the nature of climbing activity pursued. The lists of new routes are by no means complete, but serve to highlight members' commitments over the years. The history is supplemented by many photographs selected from the Club's collection.

After the history there are articles, poems and songs from the 1930s, 40s and 50s describing a variety of climbs and explorations, as well as a selection of notes on meets during the Second World War. Next are three articles, beginning with **The Bureaucrat and The Mountaineer**, which sit together neatly and have their own introduction (we asked Bob Reid and Kevin Howett of the MCofS to respond to the **Bureaucrat** article and contribute to our Journal describing their current work). Then there are articles, poems, cartoons and extracts from Club Log Books about more recent activities from the 1970s

onwards. These include in particular tales from the extremely active period of the mid to late 1970s when a great number of first ascents were achieved by members - from the amusing **Ballad of Childe Christie** to Ken Johnstone's account of the 3rd ascent of **The Clearances** in Glen Coe.

The remaining articles were written for this Journal and, as with the proceeding articles, consist of poems, cartoons, serious climbing accounts and more amusing reflections.

Choose your own favourite, and treasure this collection as a fitting tribute not only to Johnnie Harvey and his early pioneering contemporaries but also to those who have carried on the traditions and spirit of the Lomond Club up to the present, and as a pointer to those who might do so in future years.

I would hope that the encouraging response to this Journal from members and others, not only in contributing but in supporting the idea generally, may begin again soon another series of 'occasional' Lomond Club Journals. At a time when the Club has never been bigger, there is clearly a great deal of climbing being done by a great number of active members. This should be documented so that we can all now and in the future share in the diversity and intensity of mountaineering currently being pursued. As the Club looks forward to more years, hopefully there will be cause to celebrate again in the future.

In the meantime, happy reading!

Richard A. Napier, LMC President

Glasgow, May 1993

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people have helped in the preparation of this Journal, and must be acknowledged.

Firstly, to all the following authors who have contributed articles (and to those whose articles from the past Journals, etc, we have been able to select) we are most grateful: Jim Allison, Douglas Benn, Richard Blackmore, Davey Clark, Ken Coates, Martin Collins, Sam Drysdale, Calum Finlayson, Flo Grant, Elvyn Haigh, Johnnie Harvey, Kevin Howett, Robbie Hutchieson, Joe Hutton, Ken Johnstone, Peter McGeoch, Richard A. Napier, John B. Nimlin, Bob Reid, Chris Roper (for his 'Foreword'), Willie Russell, Ian Spring, John Stevenson, Lawrence Travers, Bill Walker, Bill Wassell, and Susan Wood. Also to those who have supplied the photos which have been selected and which are individually credited.

Secondly, the wisdom and efforts of Lomond Club members in past years for having produced those Journals of 1944-57, and having kept up Club records, must be noted, without which it would not have been possible to reproduce here the good articles which have given much pleasure in selecting. As must the endeavours of members in recent years who have so faithfully and entertainingly kept up the Club Log Books from which some extracts have been taken. Thanks are due also to Geoff Birtles, Editor of the former CRAGS Magazine, for permission to reproduce Dougie Benn's cartoon, 'Rock Climbing For Beginners'.

Thirdly, many thanks are due to all the members past and present, and any others who may have been missed out, who have given much help and advice in contributing historical Club information (particularly for the 'History of the Club'), in reading drafts and assisting in the final compilation of text and photos during the long preparation of this Journal: George Christie, Ken Coates, Sam Drysdale, Calum Finlayson, Maisie Haining, Bob Houston, Frank Huggins, Ken Johnstone, Allan May (for preparing the photos), Willie Russell, Lawrie Travers, and Susan Wood.

Fourthly, this is an opportunity to thank the past members who contacted the Club and attended the 60th Dinner last year, and I hope they agree this Journal is a fitting tribute to a Club which has given us all pleasure in some way.

Last but not least, Richard Blackmore must be thanked for the loan of his AppleMac computer for the word-processing of the text. And the generous help of Garry Thomas is appreciated for the typesetting and preparation of the Journal for printing.

[Editor]

THE LATE JOHNNIE HARVEY

A tribute to the Founder-President of the Lomond Club

by LAWRENCE TRAVERS

Whenever the Lomond Mountaineering Club is mentioned, the name Johnnie Harvey inevitably crops up. Johnnie Harvey, as most will know, was the founder of the Lomond Club, and he retained his office as President of the Club for 30 years, such was his charisma and the appreciation shown to him by the members during that time.

I first met Johnnie in the early 50s on the Campsie Hills above Glasgow - always a meeting place for Lomond Club members when there was no official meet. He introduced me to Agnes Millar, his girlfriend, who was manageress of Blacks camping shop in Hope Street in Glasgow.

Following that first meeting with Johnnie, he invited me to a Club meet in Glen Coe the next weekend. I joined the Club bus destined for Glen Coe on the Saturday afternoon, and on the Sunday Bill Hamilton and Johnnie invited me to try a rock climb. **Bell's Buttress** was the route chosen. It is on the West Face of Aonach Dubh below Bidean nam Bian, first climbed by and named after Dr J.H.B. Bell of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. Johnnie was second on the rope. He very patiently explained all the moves and the climb was completed without undue incident. We arrived back at the Clachaig campsite for supper and a good 'crack' after such an enjoyable day, one I have always remembered.

I had the good fortune to join Johnnie and Agnes on a number of outings, not always days on the hills. On wet days Johnnie was sure to know some shepherd or gamekeeper whom he could call upon - such as Mr Elliot, a good friend of the Club at Clachaig, whose son is now the Ranger at the National Trust for Scotland Centre in Glen Coe.

Johnnie was a man of many talents and a very good organiser. He and his old friend Charlie McAteer (the Director of a bus company) would arrange coach trips to the Austrian and Swiss Alps each summer. Johnnie also earned the title of 'the Diplomat' since he was forever instrumental in sorting out some of the feuds between the Lomonds and the Creag Dhu, one bone of contention being the hitching of lifts around Balloch.

A particularly memorable event was the Lomonds' 25th Anniversary Club Dinner in 1957, held in Sloan's Restaurant in the Argyll Arcade in Glasgow. I recall Johnnie, resplendent in evening wear, standing in the hotel foyer greeting members and friends. Following speeches by guest members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and other climbing organisations, Johnnie was presented with an inscribed altimeter. Agnes received a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

I had an occasion to call on Johnnie at his flat in Hill Street, Charing Cross, and was surprised to see a large collection of oil and water-colour paintings which he had painted himself over the years, another field which proved his talents.

Many enjoyable weekends were spent in the company of Johnnie and Club members over the seasons of the ensuing years. The Isle of Arran was always a favourite for the Spring Holiday. I recall my last week on Arran well. During our climb through the glen Johnnie would proudly produce his altimeter and inform us how many feet per hour we were climbing. As we progressed up the hill Johnnie complained of chest pain. After a resting spell a decision was made that we would return to camp. Within a few weeks Jim Brown called at my home to inform me that Johnnie had passed away following a heart attack. That was in the Autumn of 1962.

30 years on the Lomonds are still very active, and one of the most highly respected clubs in the West of Scotland, with a 'boatload' of memories from the past to share with the present and future members.

Lawrence Travers, September 1992

LIST OF CLUB PRESIDENTS 1932-1993

1932 – 1962	Johnnie Harvey, Founder of the Club
1963 – 1965	John Thomson
1966 – 1970	Lawrence Travers
1970 – 1971	Ken Baird
1972	Dave Sutherland
1973	Thomas Hardie
1974 -1975	Ken Johnstone
1975 – 1976	Benny Swan
1976 – 1978	Dave Partridge
1978 – 1981	George Christie
1981 – 1986	Ken Johnstone
1986 – 1988	Lawrence Travers
1988 – 1990	Henry Hannah
1990 – 1991	Willie Johnstone
1991 – 1992	Chris Roper
1992 – 1993	Richard Napier

A HISTORY OF THE CLUB

60 Years of the Lomond Mountaineering Club 1932-1992

by RICHARD A. NAPIER

The Lomond Mountaineering Club was founded around 1932 by Johnnie Harvey. An active climber, Harvey was part of a young generation who had taken to the mountains north of Glasgow increasingly throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Club has survived so far for 60 years, and in that time has been one of the most respected clubs in the west of Scotland.

1992 saw the Club celebrate its 60th Anniversary, which was shared with many past and present members. 60 years is a long time when you consider what changes and developments have taken place within the sport of mountaineering. The Lomond Club grew out of the Depression of the 1930s as one of several contemporary groups and clubs of working-class outdoor people. It is by no means one of the oldest clubs in the country, and the traditions and achievements of other similar clubs of whatever age must be kept in mind when reflecting on the history of the Lomonds. But it is worth pointing out here that of those 1930s groups only the Lomond Club appears to have survived today in its original form as an organised and well-attended mountaineering club. So, for the Club's own members from all periods of its 60 years there must have been, and there must still be, a sense of pride for what it has achieved in its own way.

It can be said, fairly, that the Lomond Club has on occasions during its time been the forefront of Scottish climbing in its own certain and modest ways: firstly, the early Club pioneers, right up to the 1950s, maintained a tradition of regular hard climbing and new-routing activity with some significant first ascents; secondly, the Club gained its own good reputation in parallel with only a few other contemporary clubs; again in the 1970s a younger generation put the Club back towards the forefront with a great number of important first ascents of Extreme rock routes which contributed to the development of technical E grades in Scotland; and lastly but not least, the Club has survived for 60 years as an organised and very active one with a high membership.

It seems there has always been a noticeable difference in the Lomond Club between taking climbing too seriously and doing serious climbs (see Richard Blackmore's final paragraph in his 'Failure' article on page 144). The classic and the hard routes of the day have always been done by members, in summer and winter. But the old maxim that "it's not what you climb but who you climb it with that makes it special" would appear to sum up the Lomond Club's spirit of comradeship and sociable mix of members over the years. As W.H. Murray has said of clubs generally, the Lomond Club has been an "essential backbone" from which many have pursued their sport of mountaineering.

Should the Club survive another 60 years, it may be that its members will strive to preserve that spirit which has made it special whilst pursuing the sport in their own way.

1932-1939: THE EARLY YEARS

The era of the Club's formation was the Depression days of the 1930s. A mixture of working and unemployed people, mainly from the working-classes, bored with Clydeside city life and the tedium of the dole queues, took to the mountains near Glasgow in search of recreation and brought new lifeblood to climbing in Scotland. The working classes had leisure time to explore their local hills. Up until the 1920s mountaineering in Scotland was dominated by the few elite clubs of the upper and middle classes who could afford such leisure.

Many of that previous generation of climbing pioneers had been lost in the First World War, and the gap in numbers and lull in activity was filled by a new generation of young climbers who flocked to the hills in droves and began to dominate the climbing scene. Unemployment was most rife in the West of Scotland, and it was here that several new climbing clubs were formed (many of which were merely small informal bands of outdoor people) amongst the hundreds of people who regularly escaped the city to travel up and down the roads and tracks to the hills and crags of the Campsies, Trossachs, Loch Lomond and Arrochar areas.

Thus the Lomond Club was one of several clubs and organisations which originated from the circumstances of that period: the Ptarmigan Club in 1929 (a small band headed by Jock Nimlin who was responsible for putting up many rock routes in Arrochar in the 1930s, and who eventually joined the Lomond Club to continue his activities); the Creag Dhu Club in 1930, headed by Andy Saunders; the Tricouni Club, which included Hamish Hamilton and Alec Small who made the first ascent of Agag's Groove in 1936; the Rucksack Club; the Scottish Ramblers Federation; the Scottish Youth Hostels Association; and some university clubs.

Like those other clubs the 'Lomonds', as the Club was called in the early years, grew out of an urge to walk, hitch, camp, doss, climb and generally escape from the city to venture into the outdoors and gather together on regular meets in favourite places. This mass movement to the Scottish mountains was paralleled in England by the formation of the Ramblers Association and highlighted by the mass trespass on Kinder Scout when people demonstrated their desire to roam free. In Scotland, groups of young rock tigers hitched their way up to the Campsie Fells, Trossachs, Arrochar Alps and Glen Coe areas, dossing in caves, disused cottages or barns, or camping under the crags. They tested themselves on the local established rock climbs, many of which they put up themselves as they popularised local crag climbing. When holidays and money permitted, they would travel further afield to other mountain areas which they had read about in the journals and books of the previous generation of gentleman climbers.

From about 1929 onwards the group who eventually formed the Lomond Club were among those early outdoor gangs and had met up regularly at Carbeth with the likes of Jock Nimlin and his band of Ptarmigans, and with

Andy Saunders' Creag Dhu Club. The Ptarmigans never survived long as a group and Nimlin, who was a great friend of Johnnie Harvey, eventually joined the Lomonds where he continued his active climbing and became one of the Club's most respected and active climbers. For many years thereafter the Lomonds often met up on the hill with members of those other few clubs, and there was always a friendly rivalry between them. The Lomond and Creag Dhu Clubs emerged as the two principal climbing clubs of that generation.

People in those days got involved in the outdoors scene without proper equipment at first. Climbing became the main activity, from their desire to explore the hills and because the men from the Clydeside shipyards and other industries took to it with their natural physical strength. But unlike the elite clubs of the Victorian era, it was not a men-only scene.

Hitch-hiking was the best way to get to places further afield like Arrochar and Glen Coe, as initially they only walked as far as they could on a Saturday night from the tram car terminus on the north side of Glasgow. Individuals could not hitch effectively without getting involved with the various gangs that had formed, and so this club scene developed with such purposes in common. Alastair Borthwick's classic book, **Always A Little Further (1939)**, describes well the spirit of hitching, dossing and climbing in those early years. Balloch by Loch Lomond eventually became too popular after a while, as more and more people got involved in the game. Johnnie Harvey acquired the nickname of 'The Diplomat' as he constantly had to sort out the hitching feuds between the Lomonds and the Creag Dhu at Balloch, such was the organised nature of the game. To be sure of getting a lift to the Glen Coe area the keenest climbers started closer to Glasgow, but often they had to make do with Arrochar (which is probably why the climbing in that area was developed more than anywhere else in the early 1930s). The climbers themselves described their antics as sleeping in every doss and climbing every mountain within 2/6 of Glasgow.

Bill Walker's article on page 66 (**In Retrospect**), and Calum Finlayson's on page 67 (**Not So Far Away Places**), both about the favourite dosses north of Glasgow used frequently throughout that period, illustrate the atmosphere of those exploratory years in which the Lomond Club evolved.

By the time Johnnie Harvey had decided to form the Lomond Mountaineering Club in 1932, therefore, the many climbers who made up its original membership were already stalwarts of those usual climbing locations frequented in the late 1920s and early 30s; they were regular occupants of the dosses, howffs and caves, and experts in the skills of hitching. The Lomond Club undoubtedly took its name from Ben Lomond or Loch Lomond, just as the Ptarmigans were named after a doss they used at Ptarmigan Lodge below Ben Lomond.

The Lomond Club set itself up as an organised, well-attended mountaineering club, taking advantage of the great number of climbers



Willie Russell soloing on **Napes Needle**, Lake District, in 1937.

Photo: Willie Russell.



Climbing above the Jenkins
Refuge, Arolla Alps, in July
1939.

Photo: Willie Russell.



Alf Slack climbing on the
Petit Dent, Arolla Alps,
in July 1939.

Photo: Willie Russell.

keen to join its ranks. It had a strong foundation in Johnnie Harvey who, as founder, retained his position as President for 30 years until his death in 1962. He later established a firm constitution for its members, and strove to maintain the standards he and the other original members had set for the Club. Over the years the Club gained a good reputation and earned respect from its kindred clubs at the time. "Johnnie Harvey's crowd", as the Club was often referred to, no doubt meant a great deal to members and non-members alike. An example of his commitment was his attendance at meetings: the Club held a members' meeting each month every year and in his thirty years it is said he missed only one meeting, and that was in 1960 due to illness.

Unlike other clubs the Lomonds admitted ladies. The good mix of male and female members over the years has been one of the Club's strengths, ensuring its continuity, and has probably helped maintain a reasonably high membership where otherwise it might have flagged with a male-only rule. There are very few records of the Club's activities in its first years, but it is noted in the 1937/38 season that there were 24 paid-up members including four ladies. But it was the dances and other social occasions which were organised, to which friends and partners were invited, which established the sociable spirit which characterised the Lomond Club. Harvey fixed an Annual Club Dance at the Prince of Wales Hall in Glasgow throughout the 1930s and 40s. Climbers were never very good at getting onto the dance floor, so Harvey introduced dances like "The Grand Old Duke of York" to get them up and dancing, which proved successful.

There is a tale from that early period of a September weekend holiday in 1934 when, typically, the Lomonds met up with the Ptarmigans and Tricounis late at night in Glen Coe and all crammed into Dan Mackay's barn to shelter from a howling gale, after arguing outside about accommodation space. After the usual rounds of story-telling and songs were exhausted, mostly by Jock Nimlin, all were eventually bedded down in the early hours of the morning, but were soon woke by the arrival of another crowd, an open-topped lorry full of twenty soaked bodies of the Creag Dhu. A welcome sight, no doubt with mixed feelings, to join the throng of Lomonds, Ptarmigans, and Tricounis, together with another motley crowd of tramps, tinkers and ponies all ensconced in the barn. But on this occasion the lorry-load did not stop to stay, only to pick up Jock Nimlin who had merely dosed in the barn for some warmth and banter while waiting to cadge his lift to Fort William.

On that occasion, as on many, the Lomonds had hitched their way north by various means and convened in Glen Coe without any particular plan of where to stay. That was typical of the less organised meets of these early years of the Club. Hitching was the only form of transport, and such luxurious dosses as Dan Mackay's barn were havens. Before the proliferation of climbing club huts and bunkhouses which exist today in all

the popular climbing areas, camping and dossing long remained the only accommodation for climbers without money. It is only within the last twenty years or so that a choice of huts and bunkhouses has changed the type of meets which popular clubs operate.

The Lomond Club began meeting weekly on a Thursday night in the Fergus Bar on Great Western Road at St Georges Cross in the mid 1930s. Willie Russell, who joined in 1937, recalls that they were often thrown out of the Fergus Bar for not drinking enough! They would sit making plans for their weekends climbing, spending the whole evening on a half pint only.

Before the more organised meets of the late 30s when Charlie McAteer's famous bus was hired (see **'The Legend of Charlie McAteer...'** on page 70 and the photo on page 40), there was always an intermingling of Lomonds, Creag Dhu and others on meets as they all headed for the same areas within their hitching limits. When the Lomond Club did start up bus meets, members of the Creag Dhu and other friends and individuals were offered any spare places on the bus.

Across the road from the Fergus Bar was Mick Travers' tailors shop where he allowed the Club to use one of his back rooms as a Club meeting place from about 1938 onwards, an arrangement which lasted for several years until the end of the war.

Eventually Johnnie Harvey set up bus run meets for the Club through his friend Charlie McAteer who was the director of a Glasgow bus company. From the late 1930s, a coach was hired weekly to take Club members, either for a day or a weekend, to climbing locations as far afield as Glen Coe, the Cairngorms, Arrochar and the Lake District. As mentioned above, spare places on the bus were offered to other kindred groups. This became the preferred pattern for meets, and as a result the Club grew in numbers and improved in organisation. Such organised bus runs soon put the Club in an enviable position, and it lasted this way for many years afterwards until fashions changed in the 1960s.

Charlie 'Flee-On' McAteer's bus was a legend in its own time. It was renowned for getting the members out and about in all weathers, to all destinations. In the summer seasons of 1938 and 1939 in particular, trips were organised to the Swiss and Austrian Alps, and Harvey continued this trend long after the war for those who could afford it. Its nickname, "The Mountaineer", was painted brightly along its body in English, French and German, as well as its continental destinations - Paris, Lucerne, Geneva, etc.

On the 1938 trip to Grindelwald in the Bernese Oberland, the bus passed through a French village late one night and the Lomonds decided to camp there. The local mayor turned out in his nightshirt to greet the kilted Lomonds, toasted them with champagne and then fell into a ditch. Next morning the Lomonds were begged by the locals to stay in their village for the rest of their holiday, but declined and moved on to higher places. Later,

when they camped in a Swiss town on a piece of ground granted to them by the local officials, they awoke to find their camp surrounded by Swiss cavalry who drew their sabres and charged at the Lomonds who scrambled for their ice axes in defence. The Second World War hadn't broken out yet, but they were told later that the cavalry commander could not resist the urge to allow his men some charging practice!

The Daily Record and Sunday Mail newspapers both covered the Club's 1939 Alps trip with illustrated articles in the Glasgow Fair Holiday issues of their papers in July of that year. That was to be the Club's last foreign trip until after the war.

As with the other few active clubs of its time, climbing activity flourished in the Lomond Club in those first years up to the start of the Second World War. The pattern of bus run meets to all the popular climbing areas within reasonable reach of Glasgow continued throughout the late 30s and early 40s until wartime travel restrictions eventually put a temporary halt to bus hiring for the Club.

The Club was always open to enthusiastic newcomers. Johnnie Harvey, though, had established a kind of probationary system where aspirants wishing to join (who may have been going out on meets with the Club for several months before being able to apply for membership) would be taken up a favourite rock climb by Harvey so he could suss them out. Both he and the novices were often teased about this. Application for membership eventually became easier much later, but that tradition of introducing novices to the sport or checking out experienced ones was always carried on to a certain extent informally. The Lomond Club has never advertised itself as an instructional organisation, although some informal instruction was always likely from the experienced members, and continues in a relaxed way today, as is the nature of climbing.

Aside from that, though, the Club's roots - of hardy pioneering climbers gathering to do their own thing in the mountains but in a collective club spirit - have never been forgotten. Neither has its principal aim of helping its members "to pursue the sport of mountaineering in the spirit of the hills and goodwill to all others." Many like-minded individuals who love the mountains and all aspects of climbing them have come and gone in the Club over the years.

Another aspect of the Club's early development was its involvement with other contemporary clubs and organisations. For instance, a Mountain Safety Committee was formed in 1936 by representatives of the main Scottish climbing clubs. Its purpose was to set up and maintain several mountain rescue posts with equipment and voluntary rescue teams drawn from the clubs. Through this the Lomond Club was made responsible for maintaining the rescue kits at Crianlarich and later at Broddick on Arran. Also, Lomond members took part in many rescues in several areas in those early years. Some rescue teams were eventually backed up by RAF teams

after 1944, but those voluntary civilian teams established in the late 1930s by the local clubs, Lomond included, formed the basis of the civilian mountain rescue teams system which exists today.

The Club was also asked by youth organisations to provide members willing to act as instructors for young people wanting to learn climbing on outdoor pursuits trips. This practice was continued by members during and after the war.

By the start of the war, therefore, the Lomond Mountaineering Club had established itself as a well-organised club with regular meets, and was recognised and respected as one of the major climbing clubs in Scotland at the time. It had set a standard which could be encouraged and maintained by the Club in future years. The achievements of other climbers and clubs in that same period were just as important, but at least the Lomonds had gained a reputation and stature for themselves which they could be proud of.

The Lomonds were very much among the hard climbing activists of that 1930s generation which established, regularly repeated, and popularised climbing on the Glasgow and Arrochar crags - Slack Dhu, Craigmore, The Whangie, Ben A'n, The Cobbler, etc. They had supplemented the remains of the earlier elite generation of climbers who had almost all been lost in the First World War. They had set a new standard, style and pace of rock climbing exploration, typified by Jock Nimlin's first ascent of **Raven's Gully (VS)** on the Buachaille in 1937 and by the first rock climbers' guidebook to The Cobbler which he produced in the late 30s with Ben Humble. And they were also, by their own circumstances and choosing, not afraid to doss around and rough it by modest means in the process.

Those pioneering and exploratory traditions were carried on by the Club's few members who managed to continue climbing during the war, and was taken up again with eagerness by others in the post-war years.

1939-1945: CLIMBING DURING THE WAR

The Second World War diminished the Club's active membership, as several members were called up for active service and stationed abroad or away from Glasgow. Meetings and climbing meets were less frequent, and as rationing and wartime travel restrictions took their toll, climbing was possible only for a few dedicated members who kept the Lomond Club's activities alive. The last bus run just before the war was to Glen Coe. The members present that weekend listened to the declaration of war over the radio in the shepherd's cottage in Glen Coe on that memorable Sunday in September 1939.

After that meet things were very much different for the Club for the next six years. Those who managed to continue climbing in Scotland during that time achieved a considerable amount in the circumstances, keeping the Lomonds alive in spirit if not in numbers. But many members were killed in action in the war, and those who survived and remained stationed abroad believed that the

Club itself had died. However, some bus runs for those still in Glasgow were carried on for as long as was possible, until restrictions forced a halt in 1941.

Towards the end of the war it was decided the Club should issue a regular journal to members at home and abroad. So from March 1944 onwards several Club Journals were produced - a good achievement given the circumstances and limited resources. They were originally a series of newsletters to "keep members, particularly in the Forces and away from Glasgow, in touch with the activities of the Club" (Editorial note from LMC Journal No.1, March 1944). But by the end of the war they had developed into a more formal journal with many good contributions from members about their climbing exploits. And members stationed abroad were able to send in material about their climbing activities while serving in the Forces. Although the first LMC Journals were modest affairs, the Lomonds had started a good trend for themselves, for many talented members contributed over the years and the series lasted until 1957.

That complete set of LMC Journals (15 issues from 1944 to 1957) is a good historical record of the Club's activities during that formative period when the Club developed and grew in popularity. They never tried to compete with the structured and often predictably staid journals of the surviving elite clubs, but what they lacked in glossy production they made up for in the apparent collective club spirit of companionship and the enthusiastic energy amongst the members for their sport, evident in many of the articles and anecdotes. It is a spirit which the Lomond Club was known for from its first days, given the era and circumstances in which the Club was formed. The camaraderie between members and the fondness for the friendships gained on meets was as important as the climbing itself. It characterised all the working-class groups of climbers which emerged in the late 1920s and early 30s, and probably contributed to and ensured the Lomond Club's survival during and long after the war.

The issue of a Club Journal during the last two years of the war was therefore very much appreciated by all members, especially those in the Forces for whom it was intended. The following notes by W. Bolton in April 1945 illustrate this widely felt anxiety for news of the Club:

"When we stood round the low-roofed kitchen of the Shepherd's house in Glen Coe on that momentous Sunday morning of September 1939, listening to the declarations of war through the radio, it seemed to me as if the Club was doomed.

"When I was called up, and had no word from the Club for a few months, it seemed to me as if the Club had disintegrated like so many other clubs. Then one day I heard from one of the members that it was still in existence. It is a most refreshing thought that outside the world of war there are men and women with balanced minds who are carrying on civilisation in a sane thinking world. It gives me great satisfaction to know that at these beautiful sunny

weekends, on the distant hills, are small companies of people wandering wherever they will - and some day I will join them."

From 'APPRECIATION' by W. Bolton, LMC Journal No.5, April 1945

Meets and pioneering activity continued to a surprising extent during the war, as members snatched whatever opportunities they could to get out and about on the mountains. Few records exist of the Club's activities before the war. It is only thanks to the Journals, and minutes books begun in 1946, that we have a clear picture of the meets and members' climbing from the war years onwards.

On 11th and 12th June 1940 Harry Grant, Peter McGeoch and a Miss Drummond visited the Buachaille in Glen Coe and worked out some new rock climbs on the East Face of the North Buttress beside Shackle Route. The party climbed the line of Shackle Route on the lower tier of the face, unknowingly, but then put up a new line on the second tier above the Green Gully - **Crack And Groove*** (Mild Severe). They added **Judas Rib*** (V.Diff), **Slanting Groove** (V.Diff) and **North East Zig-Zag** (Diff). Up until then Shackle Route (recorded in 1936) was the only route on that face.

[* These two routes, although included in W.H. Murray's original 1949 Glen Coe guidebook, seem to have been forgotten about as they are not listed in the SMC's new 1992 Glen Coe guide (which claims to be comprehensive).]

The next year, 1941, Grant, together with Flo Grant, G. McKinley, C. McPherson, Willie Russell and Alf Slack, and also W. Carr of another club, visited Arran and put up **Tarsuinn No.2 Chimney** (Very Severe) with a modern grade of 5a for the crux) on the Meadow Face of Beinn Tarsuinn, a particularly hard climb for its day.

It was Alf Slack who discovered the climbing potential of Coire Daimh on Beinn Udlaidh, Glen Orchy, establishing several good summer and winter lines over many visits to the hill between 1941 and 1943 with various other Lomond Club members. This corrie is mistakenly considered a winter one only nowadays due to the lack of information about these original routes in the current SMC's **Arran, Arrochar & Southern Highlands** guidebook (1989). It is worth noting them here, not only to put the record straight but to illustrate the considerable summer potential of the Coire Daimh cliffs which are about 100m high. The routes put up between September 1941 and October 1943 are as follows: **Coolin Ridge** (Mod) by Jock Nimlin and Alf Slack, and **Fold Buttress** (V. Diff) by Slack, both on the North Ridge of Beinn Uoldaidh; and in Coire Daimh itself, [315 B] **Fissure Slab** (Diff) by Peter McGeoch and Slack, [317] **Quartzvein Scoop** (Diff) by Robbie Hutchieson and Slack, [321B] **The Black Wall** (V.Diff) by Nimlin and Slack, [324] **South Gully of the Black Wall** (V.Diff) by Hutchieson, A. Hutchieson, Mrs. R. Hutchieson, Archie Kay and Slack, [326 B] **Quartzite Chimney East** (V.Diff) by McGeoch, R. Chalmers, L. Gates and Slack, [326 C] **Quartzite Chimney West** (Mod) by Slack, [327] **Ramshead Gully** (V. Diff) by Hutchieson, Hutchieson and Slack, and [331]

Central Gully (I/II) by Willie Russell, Hutchieson, Hutchieson and Slack.

[All reference numbers correspond with those in the current SMC guide]. Hopefully these routes will be included in a further edition of the guidebook.

By this time Jock Nimlin was an active and prominent member of the Lomond Club. In the 1930s he had put up a host of excellent new rock climbs in the Arrochar and Ben A'n areas including on The Cobbler **Nimlin's Direct Route (V.Diff, 1933)**, **Right-Angled Groove (Severe, 1934)** and the now classic **Recess Route (V.Diff, 1935)**, and on Ben A'n the well-trodden **Last 80 (S)**. He had also compiled the first rock climber's guidebook to The Cobbler and Arrochar area in the late 1930s with Ben Humble. In 1937 he had made the first ascent of **Raven's Gully (VS)** on the Buachaille which, with a modern grade of HVS 5a, was a considerable achievement and reckoned to be the hardest pre-war route in Scotland. That climb had set a new standard for Scottish climbing which was taken up by many after the war. Nimlin continued his pioneering and active mountaineering considerably both during and after the war with the Lomond Club and he was a highly respected and influential figure in the 1940s and 50s. Three of his articles from the Club Journals are reproduced in this issue.

In May 1940 Nimlin, with Miss J. Dryden and R. Peel, put up **Sesame Groove (V.Diff)** and **North Wall Traverse (Diff)** on The Cobbler; and in July 1942 with R. Gowers he explored and established the **Lost Valley Upper Gorge** in Glen Coe, a rock route up through the many cascades of the gorge, continuing a particularly Scottish trend of big wet ravine climbing. Other such



Bill Wassell, Calum Finlayson, J. Muir and John Bell skiing on Meall a' Bhuiridh, Blackmount, in 1941.

Photo: Calum Finlayson.

big wet routes like The Chasm (1931), Deep-Cut Chimney (1936), Nimlin's own Raven's Gully (1937), and the Clachaig Gully (1938) had occupied a great deal of competitive time and effort by the new generation over many years.

The friendly rivalry between the Lomond Club and Creag Dhu Club (who also kept their activities alive during the war) was just as exuberant during this time. In 1942, for instance, the Creag Dhu is reputed to have entered into competition with the Lomonds to see who could be the first to **descend** all the existing routes on The Cobbler!

Club meets thrived to some extent throughout the war with the available members (see the selection of '**Club Meets During The War**' page 72). The winter and summer of 1944 in particular were busy times for the Club. A big snow fall in March 1944 brought the Club's keen skiers out in force. Easter of that year was spent at Ben A'n, and Jock Nimlin is said to have carried his 16-months old daughter up some of the routes on his back. Most of his own routes there, such as Birch Wall, The Rent and The Last 80, were by then classics of the crag and trafficked regularly by the Club.

In the Autumn of 1944 Alf Slack and Willie Russell made a variation route on the South Ridge area of the Rosa Pinnacle on Arran, by climbing the lower part of the buttress and treading right to reach the main ridge above - **Slack and Russell's Route (Severe)**. Most of the routes on this side of Chir Mhor (such as South Ridge Direct, Caliban's Creep, Sou'wester Slabs and Labyrinth) were all put up between 1941 and 1946 and **Slack and Russell's Route** was an original line at the time which contributed to the development of the area, although their precise line is unclear.

As mentioned above, the Club was asked by some organisations to provide volunteer members to act as instructors for young people learning climbing. One such instructional day was organised by the Scottish Council for Physical Recreation on 9th June 1945 to take a party of Rover Scouts up The Cobbler. So a procession of some thirty Club members and Scouts, said to have looked like a scene from the crossing of the Chilcoat Pass in Charlie Chaplin's **Gold Rush** movie, made its way up from Arrochar and thronged around its base camp at the Narnain Boulder. With the addition of about twenty or more regular visitors to the hill, the Stone probably saw its greatest crowd for a while. The swarm of climbers took over the crags of The Cobbler next day, with the kind of queueing that exists there today on a hot day.

In August 1945 Harry Grant and Jimmy Haining added their own **Route 1 (Severe)** to the list of possible ways up the east side of the Crowberry Tower on the Buachaille, previous routes up the Tower until then being only moderate climbs or scrambles. That same month Grant and Haining, with Flo Grant and Maisie Haining, visited the 250 feet high quartzite cliff of Coir' a' Ghuibhsachan on An Teallach and established two good routes, **Route 1** and **Route 2**, both Severe. Others have probably visited this crag since then, (see SMC's recently published Northern Highlands Vol.1 guidebook) but information is lacking. However, the height and quality of climbing, according to their account, gives

this crag some potential and merit.

That was probably the last of the Club's new route activity during the war, but several other meets were held in the Autumn of 1945.

Because of travel restrictions there had been no Club bus runs since 1941. But the possibilities of peace happening in late 1945 allowed bus runs to be resumed, and on 11th August that year the Club ran a bus to Glen Coe for a weekend meet. It was, as expected, well attended. Those hopes of an end to the war and imminent declaration of peace are captured well in Flo Grant's moving article entitled **'The First Bus Run'** from the Club Journal of that autumn (see page 76), which tells of that meet shortly before the actual end of the Second World War.

1945-1958: RENEWED CLIMBING ACTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLUB

The few years immediately following the war were very active ones for the Club. That first bus run resumed in 1945 marked the beginning of a revived Lomond Club, as well as a return to peaceful life. Now that the war was over, regular bus runs most weekends throughout the autumn, winter and spring seasons were established again by the Club. They were well attended by members and friends all keen to sample the joys of the freedom to roam and climb again.

Part of the meets programme for the 1948/49 season, for example and typical of the post-war years, was as follows:

August	14th: Glen Coe	15th:	Ben Lawers
	27th: Langdale, Lakes	22nd:	Glen Strae
September	11th: Glen Coe	29th:	Bridge of Orchy
	18th: Glen Clova	February	5th: Glen Coe
	25th: Fort William		12th: Ben Lawers
October	2nd: Glen Strae		18th: Glen Shee
	9th: Glen Coe		26th: Kingshouse
	16th: Glen Coe	March	5th: Glen Lyon
	23rd: Ben Cruachan		12th: Glen Coe
November	6th: Trossachs		18th: Glen Clova
	13th: Glen Coe		26th: Glen Coe
	20th: Glen Lyon	April	2nd: Duror
December	4th: Glen Coe		9th: Glen Coe
	11th: Ben Lawers		15th: Aviemore
	17th: Glen Coe		23rd: Kingshouse
	25th: Glen Coe		30th: Glen Lyon
	31st: Glen Coe	May	7th: Glen Coe
January	8th: Glen Coe		13th: Fort William
			21st: Trossachs

During the war the Club Journals had established a trend, enabling members to share in the knowledge and experience of others, and it continued for twelve years after the war.

Pioneering activity also continued. In 1945 Jock Nimlin, together with Jenny Nimlin, David Easson and Jim Stevenson, established **Echo Crag (V.Diff)** on Beinn Fhada in Glen Coe, a new route on the steep and clean rocks directly above the Boulder in the Lost Valley. That route is said to have got its name from the double echo obtained from the Aonach Eagach and Gear Aonach ridges opposite. In 1946 Tommy McGuinness, one of the many post-war hard climbers who emerged in the Club, accompanied H.A. Carsten of the Climbers Club on the first ascent of **The Crack (VS)**, a bold new route in its time up the conspicuous crack splitting the front face of Raeburn's Buttress on Ben Nevis. It typified the 'Scottish VS' type of climb which developed after the war. In 1948 McGuinness emigrated to Canada, along with Joe Hutton and other members. McGuinness and Hutton were both prominent members of the Club, the former in particular being known far and wide for his climbing technique which had put him in the front ranks of Scottish climbing at the time. He and Hutton became part of a colony of 'expatriate Lomonds' who had settled in Canada and who explored the mountains of British Columbia in the late 1940s and early 50s (see Hutton's articles on pages 85 - 88).

Jock Nimlin and David Easson put up **Ben's Fault (Diff)** on Ben lme in Arrochar in November 1946, starting off another spate of new routes in the Arrochar area over the next few years. Nimlin with R. Peel put up several routes on The Brack in May 1947, including the excellent **Four Step Ridge**. The same year on The Cobbler Alf Slack and G. Fraser put up **Slack's Route (Hard Severe)** a few feet to the left of Nimlin's own Direct Route on the South Peak. Nimlin, Easson and Ben Humble discovered **Slab and Groove (V.Diff)** on Creag Tharsuinn in June 1947. And in September 1949 Nimlin put up **Face Route (V.Diff)**, solo, also on Creag Tharsuinn. In 1952 he and Humble established the potential of the cliffs of Beinn an Lochan.

In October 1947 and October 1949 Alf Slack had investigated the north side of Ben Cruachan and established two climbs on some of the slabby buttresses just east of the beallach between Taynuilt Peak and Main Peak, **Beallach Buttress (Severe)** and **Long Ladder (Diff)**.

It was around this time also, in the summers of 1945 and 1946, when Ben Humble made an award-winning film entitled **A Cragman's Day** which starred three members of the Lomond Club with whom Humble climbed during this period - Jock Nimlin, David Easson and Harry Grant. This film enacted a typical day's climbing, with the three climbers making a traverse of The Cobbler including ascents en route of Ardgarten Wall (Nimlin's own route of 1937) and the classic Arete of the Centre Peak. It was a great technical achievement in its time, with the camera very much on the routes; and that together with several other set up scenes depicting a typical day's

climbing, makes it an important historical record of climbing activity during this period. That complete cine film of 1945/46 has now been preserved on video tape and adds to the many other interesting records of the Club which have been collected during this 60th Anniversary year.

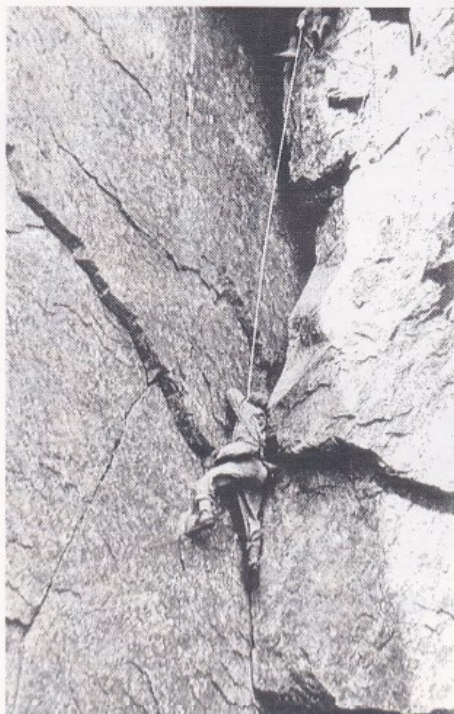
Johnnie Harvey was always a supporter of the exploratory urge in members. His own particular fascination was in seeking out unclimbed pinnacles. It is said he made the first ascent of **Carlin Maggie**, the notorious pinnacle on the flanks of the Lomond Hills in Fife, in his earlier years. In 1948 he claimed the first ascent of a rock tower called the **Hag's Tooth** on Carantouhill in Ireland (see his article on page 83).

The activity of the pioneering members was not restricted to summer rock climbs, as the Club's meets were just as busy in winter. A couple of Alf Slack's visits to Beinn Udlaidh in 1943 (mentioned above) included the first winter ascent of the **Central Gully (I/II)**, wrongly attributed to a 1968 party in the SMC's 1989 guide to that area. Russell and Slack had established a gully at the head of the Lost Valley in Glen Coe in April 1944. In January 1948 Jock Nimlin, David Easson and Ben Humble put up **Pinnacle Gully (I/II)** on A'Chrois in Arrochar. In January 1953 Nimlin and Robert Grieve made a first winter ascent of **Elephant Gully (III/IV)** on The Brack in Arrochar, a high standard climb for that time.

In the two summers of 1954 and 1955 John Eccles and Tony Garman explored the Jenny's Lum area of the Campsie Fells crags above Blanefield, reviving activity on these crags which were first pioneered by the early gangs of the late 1920s and early 30s. They put up five new routes there - **Route 1 (V.Diff)**, **Route 1 Variation (Severe)**, and **Shattered Crack (Severe)** on the walls either side of the Lum, and the highlights of their activity there being **Sunset Groove (VS)** and **Jacob's Dilemma (VS)**. They spent four hours working out **Sunset Groove**, although it is only 55 feet high, as it was described as very hard on minute holds and unstable rock, and they were nearly benighted.

Again in 1955 Garman, with David 'Big Mur' Johnson, made a first ascent up the grooves and slabs just left of Kellet's Left Hand Route on the Minus Two Buttress of Ben Nevis - **Garman & Johnson's Route (Severe)**. Still on the Ben, over on Carn Dearg Buttress Garman and Eccles achieved a bold variation of Kellet's Route II, which involved some very exposed traverses and minor down-climbing en route to pass some huge roofs - **Eccles & Garman's Route (VS)**. The length of this latter route (700 feet), its exposure and the fact that they climbed it in big boots, made it a bold undertaking at the time. Only a repeat ascent, which is probably still awaited (since this route like other LMC members' first ascents appears not to have reached the SMC for inclusion in guidebooks), will probably reveal the true excellence of their route. The same can probably be said of Garman & Johnson's Route on Minus Two Buttress, mentioned above.

A typical mixed Lomond Club and
Creag Dhu Club meet in the Lake
District in August 1946



Ken Copeland (Creag Dhu) leading
Sepulchre (VS) on Kern Knotts
Crag; Bert Dobbie (Lomond)
belaying and seconding.
Photos: Frank Huggins.



Tommy McGuinness on **Shackle Route (S)**, Buachaille Etive Mor, Glen Coe, in 1947.

Photo: Frank Huggins.



BLI/1017.

Lomond Club members on the 'scree run' during the filming of the Bonnie Prince Charlie movie, in the Lost Valley, Glen Coe, in August 1946 (see Photo 8 on page 34 also).

Photo: Maisie Haining.



Lomond Club members during the filming of the **Bonnie Prince Charlie** movie in the Lost Valley, Glen Coe, in August 1946.

Photo: Maisie Haining.



Waiting to board the Lomond Club bus (Charlie McAteer's famous coach) in Waterloo Street in Glasgow in February 1947. Ski sticks were just as prevalent as ropes and ice axes in those days.

Photo: Frank Huggins.

New Club meeting rooms

Before the war the Club had met in Mick Travers' back shop room as well as the Fergus Bar, but in 1946 Alf Slack donated the use of his business premises in Waterloo Street in Glasgow for the Club to use as Club Rooms. There it met on the first Wednesday of every month for a general members' meeting to discuss Club business and decide on locations for meets. In 1948 the Club had to vacate these Waterloo Street rooms and moved to Elmbank Street. From then on it moved occasionally from one location to another until finally it was turfed out of its rooms immediately after the death of the Club President, Johnnie Harvey, in 1962. He had been President since the Club began in 1932 and had many contacts in business and commerce which allowed him to always secure some kind of meeting room for the Club to be able to enjoy such facilities (as well as the long term arrangement with Charlie McAteer for hiring a bus at weekends). In the meeting rooms there was usually a table-tennis or billiards table and canteen facilities as well an equipment store and space for the meetings at which about 30 people would attend regularly.

With such a venture started after the war, and the space available, the Club was then able to instigate a series of monthly lectures and slide shows during winter and spring seasons each year. This annual series carried on without fail until well into the 1970s as a regular Lomond Club tradition, and with considerable enthusiasm and contribution from members. Occasionally some guest lecturers were invited: John Cunningham, the well known Creag Dhu climber who was responsible for putting up many hard routes in the late 40s and 50s; Bill Murray, the celebrated JMCS activist with his own good record of first ascents and mountaineering books; Tom Weir, who had accompanied the Club on many bus runs after the war, and also known for his writings: these are some of the friends of the Club who kindly took part in the rounds of talks organised annually. Mostly, though, the talks were by members, and this tradition continues today in the form of the annual members' slide show. Also, exhibitions of members' photographs were put up in the rooms. There was even one visiting exhibition in the late 1940s of photos by Frank Smythe of his Alpine and Himalayan expeditions. Some members' cine films of Club meets were shown regularly, and several of these film clips from as early as 1939 to the late 40s have been preserved on video tape. Like Ben Humble's 1946 film it adds to the many other interesting historical Club records collected by the Club during this 60th Anniversary year. The films of meets on that tape include shots of early skiing activity on Meall a' Bhuidh in the Blackmount (1939-40), a location frequented regularly by Club members during those early years, and are an important record of meets in that period (1939-47).

Part of the Club's business at meetings at this time, as was common with other contemporary clubs, was its involvement with the newly formed British Mountaineering Council (formed in 1944 and initially based in London), and then the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs (formed in 1946). The ASCC was made up of representatives from the clubs, as opposed to being a

separate administrative organisation like the BMC, and soon replaced the BMC in terms of directly concerning and representing the Scottish clubs. Through the ASCC the Lomond Club kept in regular contact with its kindred clubs (principally the Creag Dhu, Tricouni, SMC, and the Ski & Outdoor Club), and LMC delegates were regularly sent to ASCC meetings (Jock Nimlin, Johnnie Harvey Willie Russell and Lawrence Travers were among those who did much work for the ASCC over the years).

In those days there was more of a common spirit of concern and mutual respect among the various climbing clubs for each other's interests. The ASCC enabled all organisations associated with mountaineering to defend their own interests from the growing threats and pressures of conflicting interests in the mountain environment. The threat to access to the hills on lower slopes by forestry plantations, for example, was an issue which emerged in the late 1940s and about which climbers voiced their concern at the time (it continues to be argued about today). Peter McGeoch's article on page 92, **The Bureaucrat And The Mountaineer**, written in 1950, summed up the feelings of many climbers at the time. The ASCC became a forum for such matters, and the Lomond Club was involved to a considerable extent. The ASCC was eventually reformed in 1970 as the Mountaineering Council of Scotland which exists today as the body representing Scottish clubs and individuals, and the Lomond Club has been affiliated to the MCofS since the early 70s.

Lomond Club film stars in Glen Coe

As a complete diversion from climbing, in August 1946 the Club was asked by the London Film Company to muster about 30 people in Glen Coe to act as extras in a movie about Bonnie Prince Charlie. It was to be shot on location in the Lost Valley. This request was accepted unanimously by the members - a chance for fame and fortune. Fame came in the form of the few seconds of footage of the 'scree run' which were eventually used in the movie (**The Master of Ballantrae**, 1954, we think). Fortune was not quite so forthcoming, as in fact the Club pursued the film company for eight years afterwards and was never paid for its members' contributions!

The filming involved the setting up of a scree run on the scree slope above the trees at the mouth of the Lost Valley, where the Lomonds were dressed in Highlander garb and would be filmed charging down the slope howling cheers of greetings to Charlie in the glen below. For the film crew it probably seemed a dangerous stunt, but for the experienced Lomonds mountaineers it was a bit of light relief and humour. The many film takes necessary to get the shot just right were probably due as much to the members having a field day making a mockery of the scene, as it was to the lousy weather conditions on the day. Needless to say the whole film crew and Lomond members had to return the following weekend to complete the filming (see photos on pages 31 and 32).

Harry Grant described this laughable affair in the LMC Journal at the time as follows:

"The weekends filming in the Lost Glen has not revealed any budding stars. The position of David Niven as leading man apparently remains secure, but from the appearance of members on that Sunday, no difficulty should be found in casting the part of the 'Dougal Craitur'. The appearance of members as they emerged from the make-up bus was, to put it mildly, frightening.

"At one time it hardly seemed possible that sufficient actors would survive the many skirmishes that took place on the way up to act in the film at all. The first wild charge down the screes - 'riding the screes', as one romantic journalist put it - was definitely the highlight of the day. Only two casualties (not Lomonds) out of fifty runners can only be attributed to some nifty footwork on the part of members, and to good luck. A very large and formidable avalanche caused by the charge failed to deter the members who, hot with the lust of battle, were prepared to scree run to the last man. After a rather tame repeat performance the gathering of the Clans was postponed until better weather.

"The following weekend saw the filming completed and the members are once again reverting to their accustomed garb."

From 'LOMONDS ON LOCATION' by Harry Grant, LMC Journal No.8, August 1946

15th Anniversary

The Club celebrated its 15th Anniversary in 1947, by which time it was very well established. At the Club's AGM of that year Johnnie Harvey remarked on "the progress made by the Club during the last decade" and complimented the Club on "its hard won prestige which put the Club in an enviable position amongst the Scottish climbing clubs." This was a proud claim for the Club to be able to make only fifteen years after its formation.

Development of skiing on Meall a' Bhuidh

Skiing became a popular sport in the years after the war, and was a significant part of winter meets. It had been a usual activity among Scottish mountaineers since it was first introduced in 1890. But after the Second World War skiing took off even more so, encouraged by those who had learned to ski as part of their service in the Forces during the war, and because surplus outdoor gear and skiing equipment was more readily available after 1945.

As mentioned above, the Blackmount with its long high slopes was a frequent location for skiing meets. Although the present White Corries skiing centre is located on the north side of Meall a' Bhuidh, it was on the opposite side of the mountain in Coire Ba where the Lomonds and other local skiing groups gathered and opened up the potential for the area. The old Ba Cottage on the edge of Ranoch Moor was used as a doss by the Club for skiing trips, but that place was eventually burned down by vandals and could no longer be used by skiing groups.

Discussions by local climbing and skiing clubs on the possibility of setting up ski tows on Meall a' Bhuidh began in 1951, and the Lomonds were asked to

take part. Several years of activity and meetings on the subject eventually led to the first permanent uplift facility being installed on the northern slopes of the hill in 1956. At that time the Lomond Club, together with other clubs and organisations, donated money towards the setting up of first aid equipment on the slopes there.

In 1952 the Club was asked by the British Mountaineering Council to provide names of members suitably qualified for the forthcoming Everest Expedition (John Hunt's successful 1953 Everest Expedition), but as far as is known no-one made any application. However, the Club sent a letter of congratulations to John Hunt afterwards as its success was a significant event in world mountaineering at the time.

Two aspects of the Club's activities up to 1958 were its continual, though never very committing, searches for a club hut of its own, and its involvement in the civilian mountain rescue system.



John Turnbull, Jimmy Stevenson and Bob Spiers on the summit of the Matterhorn in July 1948.

Photo: John Turnbull.

Searches for a Club hut

Few other clubs up until then had their own hut in a popular climbing area. But a club as well established as the Lomond certainly deserved one. It had always been discussed as a possibility, and so on the few occasions which were offered the Club sought to acquire a suitable building. The Lomond and other clubs and individuals who had grown up in the 1930s period had been used to dosses and howffs in the climbing areas, and by mutual respect with the various landowners in such locations reasonably good relations prevailed with the owners of these buildings which were frequently used. Since these dosses were shared, the ASCC met in Edinburgh in 1947 to discuss the possibility of acquiring a hut in the vicinity of the Glasgow hills for the use of local clubs. It was decided that the Lomond Club would be responsible for such a hut if one was ever acquired, to be maintained on behalf of the ASCC. But little became of those early hopes for such a shared hut facility in the West of Scotland. The Lomond Club decided to carry on with its own searches after that.



A Lomond Club 'howff' near Blackrock, Glen Coe, in 1947. Members pictured are: Bill Forrest, Andy Wynd, Bert Dobbie, J. Martin, Hugh Forrest, Calum Finlayson and his wife.

Photo: Calum Finlayson.

In 1948 relations were very good with Cameron the farmer at Alltnafeidh in Glen Coe, and the Lomond Club was promised the use of a barn building there if they undertook to rebuild and maintain it in good repair, as it was at that time unusable even as a primitive doss. So the Club drew up plans and obtained prices for the construction materials, aiming to do the work themselves. But insufficient funds even for that could be raised, and that project had to be abandoned. They then concentrated on looking for more intact buildings.

Another possibility arose the next year of acquiring an empty house in the Fintry Hills, but was not available for their desired purpose, and the Fintry Hills were no longer such a popular area anyway. Another building in Glen Coe was investigated in 1952, but again to no avail. And a final serious attempt during this period was made for a shepherd's cottage in Coire Grogan in the Arrochar Alps in 1953, again with no outcome. Searches for a permanent Club hut did not resume again until the 1970s.

Involvement in mountain rescues

The other aspect of the Club's activities at this time was its involvement in mountain rescues. The popularity of climbing after the war inevitably led to the occurrence of more incidents involving the need to rescue injured or dead climbers from the mountains. As was mentioned above, rescue teams were assembled from a pool of volunteers from the local clubs. That civilian system established in the 1930s, initiated by the clubs for their own good out of respect for and understanding of the inevitable potential dangers which they and their climbing colleagues got into, worked as follows: the police would be alerted of the accident, who then contacted by telephone a rescue co-ordinator in one of the clubs (depending which club was responsible for the local rescue kit in the vicinity of the incident), who in turn mustered a team from people available; the team then travelled by public or private means to collect the kit and mount the rescue at the location. Most of the rescues in those early years involved bringing down a casualty whose location was precisely known, the alert having been made by a companion or other climber at the scene. Some teams were backed up by RAF teams after 1944, to help in the search for a missing body which required more co-ordination. If there were several climbers at an accident scene they would bring down the casualty immediately with whatever equipment they had to hand to save time. The Lomonds were very much involved in rescues from the early years of the system, having been responsible for the kits at Crianlarich and Broddick.

One rescue recorded in great detail by the Club took place on The Cobbler on 13th April 1948. A climber had fallen while climbing Recess Route on the North Peak, had broken a leg and had spent the night on a ledge waiting for the rescue team to arrive next morning. Some men from the Torpedo Range at Arrochar had climbed up to the foot of the cliff and stayed within earshot of the victim all night. The rescue team which included Willie Russell of the Lomonds arrived at the scene at 7am on the following morning, and effected a competent stretcher rescue of the casualty to bring him down to an ambulance waiting at the road. By then the press had heard of the accident and several photographers were hungrily milling around the team when it reached the road. Russell admitted at the time that such voluntary teams were relatively inexperienced at administering first aid in those days, but as the climbers themselves were the only people available and willing, and the only people able to carry out such tricky stretcher rescues on crags and mountain environments, they did what was necessary to bring a casualty off a hill. Russell also said that they told the press photographers on that day what they thought of their 'story-scoop' attitude in such a situation.

A new Mountain Rescue Committee for Scotland was eventually set up in 1950 with the aim of improving and developing civilian mountain rescue teams, and to help maintain the voluntary system initiated by the clubs in the 1930s.

A few other accidents occurred during that period in which the Lomond

Club was involved in providing team members, and one in particular in Glen Coe in 1951 was mentioned in the Club Journal at the time as follows:

"In May 1951 in very wet weather some of our members rescued an injured climber from the Archer Rib route on Aonach Dubh. The stretcher was lowered off down the Rowantree Wall, an operation which constituted one of the slickest rescues ever carried out in Glen Coe, according to a local observer."

From LMC Journal No.13, Spring 1952

By 1958 the civilian mountain rescue system in Scotland, especially in the West Highlands, was well established. But around that time there was a rumour that the RAF-assisted civilian teams were to be disbanded; also, it was generally known that some police disliked participating in rescues. There was obviously political pressure for a radical change to a system which used public resources. But in reaction to this, the Glasgow based climbing clubs met to discuss the setting up of new joint teams for the areas threatened to be affected, each club to be responsible for a kit as was the case up until then. The clubs involved, Lomond included, decided also that they should contribute to an annual insurance premium covering the new proposed teams, in order to keep an effective and competent civilian system going in the event of a withdrawal by RAF team support.

But this proved to be a short-lived episode, as official word soon came back from the RAF that their teams were not in fact to be disbanded. However, the episode did demonstrate the resolve and voluntary commitment amongst the local climbing clubs to preserve their well-established system of civilian mountain rescue teams benefiting all people using the hills.

25th Anniversary

The Lomond Club celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 1957. By that time it had undoubtedly achieved a great deal, not only in the pioneering of new summer and winter routes in well known as well as unlikely areas of the Scottish mountains, but also in establishing for its members in their pursuit of mountaineering a well-organised club with regular meets, reasonable club rooms, regular social functions, an occasional journal, and many other peripheral activities. The fact that the founder-President Johnnie Harvey had been re-elected every year demonstrated the respect and acknowledgement which the members showed for what he and the other original members of the Club had achieved in the early years and maintained throughout its 25 years so far.

The Club's 25th Anniversary Dinner that year was described as follows:

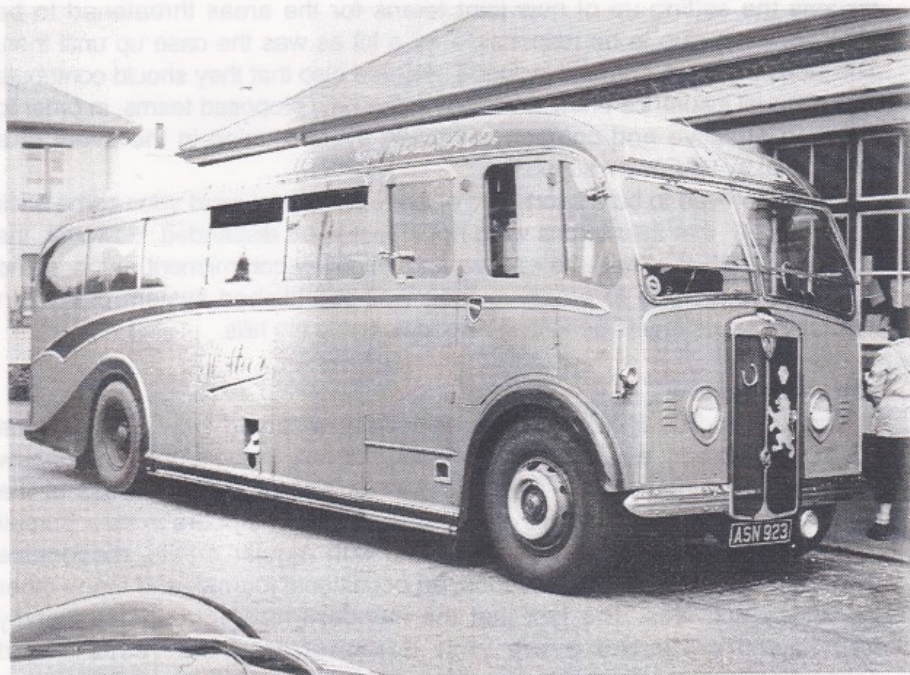
"The venue was Sloan's Restaurant in the Argyll Arcade, and it had just the right intimate atmosphere. Including guests from Scottish Ski Club, the Creag Dhu, Skiing & Outdoor Club, JMCS, SMC, and GUM Club, plus

Betty Starke, the diners numbered 79 and were officially piped in by Piper James Brown to 'Scotland The Brave'.

"Speakers followed the dinner. Johnnie Harvey led off with a history of the Club. Peter McGeoch gave a toast to the guests, replied to by Jeffrey Mason of the SMC. The toast to the lassies was billed for Jock Nimlin, but Jock was abed and couldn't make it. John Cuthill of the Scottish Ski Club was pressganged into the job and a witty speech he gave too. But Betty Starke's reply gets the golden banock - she has a nice free and easy style of speaking.

"Oh, there was music too, with songs from Calum Finlayson and Jimmy Allison, accompanied by the Club's friend from America, James Woodling, on the piano. Bill Hamilton brought along his squeezebox and a wee ceilidh followed until the management in desperation turned down the lights. Parties sprouted up later in various houses in a' the airts. Slainte!"

From LMC Journal No.15, Spring 1957



Charlie McAteer's famous bus ("The Mountaineer") which took the Lomond Club to all destinations in all weathers from the late 1930s to the late 1950s. Pictured here in July 1952.

Photo: Maisie Haining.



Members and gear on a 'family' summer meet at Glenmore, Cairngorms, in 1955, having been given a lift from Aviemore railway station.

Photo: Willie Russell

The editorial notes in the Club Journal of 1957 stated the following:

"Our 25th Anniversary finds us functioning well as a club. The membership is up to strength, and with the infusion of some young Tigers we are once more making our name in the rock climbing aspect of mountaineering. Also in the equally important and sometimes forgotten facet of mountaineering which is the exploration of the Hills and Glens away from the popular climbing areas, the Lomonds have made themselves known and respected."

From LMC Journal No.15, Spring 1957

Another proud claim for the Club to be able to make.

Thus ended the first 25 years of the Club, an extremely active and increasingly popular development of one of the country's foremost climbing clubs of that period.

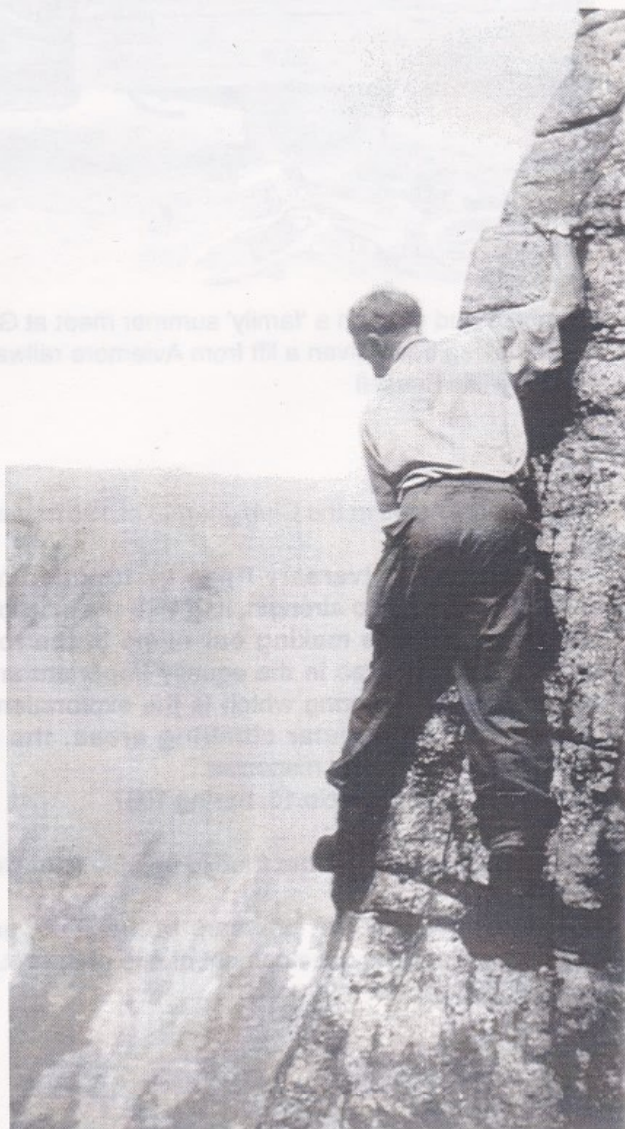
1958-1962: DECLINING ACTIVITY AND THE END OF AN ERA

The Club Journal of 1957 had marked the end of an active period for the Club. It was in fact the last such journal the Club has produced until this special 60th Anniversary issue. In the few years after that some efforts were made, but despite many encouragements there was little enthusiasm from members at the time.

This reflected a general decline in climbing activity by the established members, and a lessening in the frequency of bus run meets. The use of private cars for more casually organised meets by smaller groups probably contributed to this also.

Jock Nimlin, one of the Lomond Club's most experienced and respected pioneering climbers throughout the 1930's, 40's and 50's, pictured here scrambling on Shelter Stone Crag, Cairngorms, in 1955.

Photo: Willie Russell.



Efforts were always made, however, to produce a journal in the ensuing years until the idea was eventually abandoned in the mid 1970s.

The pattern of meets was reduced to fortnightly then monthly by the late 1950s due to a continuing smaller turnout from the members. Despite a small annual infusion of young climbers keen to pursue the sport and carry on the Lomond Club's activities and traditions in their own fashion, the natural consequences of the original memberships declining input, for various reasons, was taking its toll.

Little can therefore be said of this period which, although active in terms of some continued meets each year, was one of decline in terms of the fervour of activity which had characterised the previous years of the Club.

The only new route of note from this time is **Slapstick Wall (Severe)** on the Lower Slabs of Coire na h'Uaimh on Arran, by some of the newer members, J. Gardiner, W. Gartshore and R. Hutchieson, in September 1959.

The end of an era

Johnnie Harvey, the founder of the Club and President for 30 years, died in September 1962, having taken ill after a meet on Arran the previous month (see Lawrie Travers' article on page 11).

Membership and activity in the Club finally dwindled in the mid 1960s following Harvey's death. By that time anyway the original members were an older generation, many of whom had drifted away for one reason or another, and there was not the same mass enthusiasm for the Lomond Club amongst the younger mountaineers of this period.

Shortly before his death, though, Harvey had presided over the Club's 30th Anniversary Dinner and AGM in 1962. On those occasions he remarked on the Club's 30 years of climbing activity, and the members themselves paid tribute to his tenure as President throughout those years. He is recognised by his contemporaries as having been a very charismatic and influential figure. After his death the Club received many letters of condolences and appreciation of him from kindred clubs and individuals.

An era of considerable activity and achievement for the Lomond Mountaineering Club ended that year.

1962-1970: QUIET YEARS AND REBUILDING OF THE CLUB

The Club traditions were faithfully carried on as normal by the remaining members in the few years after Harvey's death. But his loyal generation slowly drifted away in the mid 1960s as meets became less frequent and enthusiasm dropped.

Quiet Years

It was left to a small group of keen, younger, recently joined members together with one or two long-standing members to carry on the meets, meetings and other activities. The convenience of its own exclusive Club

Rooms was ended too for the Club as they were turned out of their premises in 1962. But the series of lectures and slide shows was carried on successfully whenever the members could arrange it. By chance the Club survived these lean years thanks to the perseverance of a few dedicated individuals keen to preserve the traditions which had been set for the Club.

Several meets each year by a spartan membership continued to the popular climbing areas. However, the extremely low number of members was discussed with some concern in 1964. For instance, only 9 people had attended the AGM in 1963, and the total Club membership at the time was little more than that.

The old stable building at Cameron's farm at Alltnafeidh in Glen Coe had been investigated in October 1964 with a view to turning it into some kind of usable doss for climbers. In 1965 the Forestry Commission was asked if they could provide a hut for the Club in the Glen Coe area, since talks with the owner of the Alltnafeidh building had not developed very promisingly.

Later in 1965 the Club at last came into the use of the building at Alltnafeidh. Here a group of members and friends had rebuilt and cleaned the interior of the old barn, making it an acceptable doss. It was shared with other clubs and individuals who all benefited from the now good relations and attitudes by the owners to such accommodation uses, reminiscent of the old dossing days of the late 1920s and early 30s.

Rebuilding of Club membership

A membership drive was therefore made in 1966 using the 'doss' in Glen Coe as an incentive for people to join the Club and swell its ranks. Whether this worked or not, or whether the Club merely became engulfed again in the wave of popularity in mountaineering (particularly summer rock climbing) that was generally taking place throughout Britain in the late 1960s, is uncertain, but membership rose steadily again at this time.

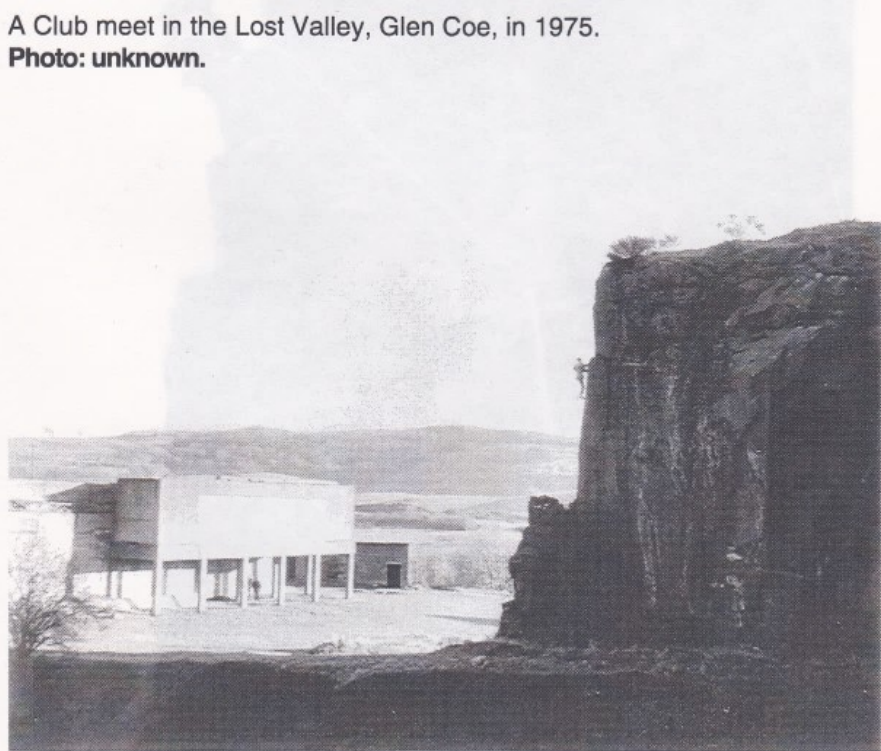
A new generation of young climbers now came on the scene as popularity in rock climbing grew. These new members revived the Club and established the pattern of active meets, often to a wide variety of climbing locations, which still exists in the Club today. The formation of many other clubs generally proliferated in this period.

The shared use of Cameron's Barn with other climbers continued for a few years, but as the area became more popular and the barn doss was not kept in a good state, the situation there was soon unsatisfactory. The possibility of purchasing or renting a building to use as a Lomond Club hut was discussed at length by the Club again in 1969. The trends in mountaineering in the late 1960s meant that the old traditional dosses of the earlier years had been abandoned and the active generation of climbers of this period sought huts in the main climbing areas.

The Lomond Club had merely gone through a bad patch, a natural after-effect of the disappearance of Harvey's generation from the active scene as



A Club meet in the Lost Valley, Glen Coe, in 1975.
Photo: unknown.



Benny Swan on the first ascent of **Promontory Direct (HVS 5a)**,
 Auchinstarry Quarry, in 1975 when the quarry was being developed by
 Club members.

Photo: Ken Johnstone



Ken Johnstone on the first ascent of **Rough Sea (E1 5a)**, Dumbarton Rock, in 1977.

Photo: Ken Johnstone.

those members had drifted away. But strong efforts to attract new members during this difficult period had worked to some extent, and steadily ensured the Club's survival into its second thirty years. Lawrie Travers in particular, President of the Club from 1966-1970 and an active member since the early 1950s, and who had done his bit for the Club's organisation in several posts over those years, can be credited with having held the Lomond Club intact through this difficult time when the Club almost petered out. Thanks to him and to one or two other dedicated individuals, we still have a Lomond Club today in the 1990s.

1970-1980: REVIVAL OF CLIMBING ACTIVITY AND CLUB PRESTIGE

The new generation of climbers who came on the Lomond Club scene in the late 1960s and early 70s revived the Club's reputation as one of the major clubs in Scottish climbing at the time, as well as restoring a regular pattern of meets for members. This revival of pioneering new routes reached a peak around 1977/78 with the development of some important Extremely Severes on the big Glen Coe cliffs, which was preceded by considerable new route activity on a variety of local Glasgow outcrops.

The late 1960s and early 70s was a time when the sport of mountaineering generally in Britain was growing in popularity, being fed by an enthusiastic youth culture in schools and universities. Also, television and media extravaganzas such as live tv broadcasts of rock climbs and reports in the climbing press on major developments in Alpine and Himalayan climbing, etc, helped to popularise the sport even more among young people. This developing change and interest in the sport attracted new members to climbing clubs all over the country, and the Lomond Club had its fair share of this. That, together with the efforts of the Club's core members to strengthen the Club, increased the membership somewhat by the mid 1970s by which time it eventually shook off the temporary lull of the previous decade. In 1972, for instance, there were 31 members listed, compared with only a handful around 1965-68. During this period the Club now met in a series of pubs in Glasgow, which attracted a considerable number of younger climbers.

Revival of climbing activity

1975 was a significant year for the climbing activity of the Club: Ken Johnstone, Club President at the time and one of its most active climbers, led a successful meet to the **Old Man of Hoy** in Orkney when he and Benny Swan climbed it by its original 1966 route. In the same summer Johnstone made an early repeat ascent of **Carnivore (E2 5c)** on Creag a' Bhancair in Glen Coe (the 4th known ascent), including Don Whillan's 1962 variation finish of this 1958 John Cunningham route. On that same day on Carnivore Brian Shields (who in the 1960s had put up the two big aid routes on Dumbarton Rock- Big Zipper and Requiem) had failed on the route, and

Johnstone's ascent had set a standard for the Club's core of climbers to emulate. Rock climbing standards therefore rose in the Club over the following years, encouraged by his example. Johnstone was in fact one of a few talented young climbers emerging in Scotland at this time (others included Dave Cuthbertson, Murray Hamilton, Rab Anderson and Willie Todd) who were all responsible for a great number of significant Extreme rock routes and the development of the technical Extreme rock grades in Scotland.

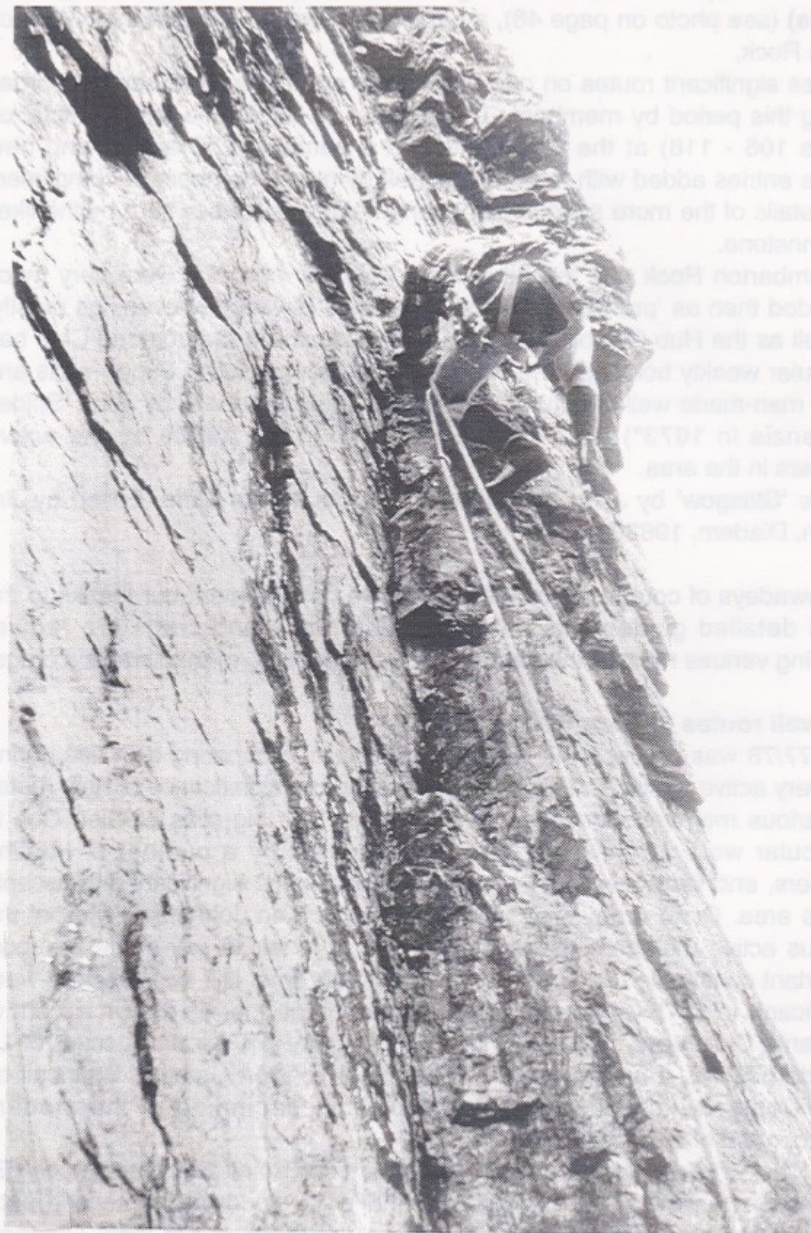
Local Glasgow crags developed

In 1975 Ken Johnstone rediscovered Auchinstarry Quarry at Kilsyth, a disused quarry at the back of a housing estate full of much rubbish from tin cans to abandoned cars, but full also of much untapped potential for new rock routes. The story goes that Ken Johnstone and Dougie Benn spotted an old quarry on the outskirts of Kilsyth; the local kids playing there told them they would find a better one down the road; they were told the same at the next one; and again at another one until Auchinstarry itself was found, the real gem of the area. Johnstone began his activity there with **Trundle (VS 5a)** on the big slab at the back of the quarry. There then followed a succession of new routes being put up at Auchinstarry over the next few years by Club members, including **Masquerade (E1 5c)**, **Promontory Direct (HVS 5a)**, (see photo on page 45), **Fish Rising (E2 5b)** and **Deep Throat (E3 5c)** by Johnstone and Benn. Auchinstarry was then developed further by a number of other local climbers over the years, and continues today in the 1990s to be the most popular crag for climbers in the Glasgow and Central belt. It was Johnstone's discovery and his initial routes contributions which established it as a major local crag. *

*(Today in 1993 parts of Auchinstarry Quarry have been changed out of recognition due to blasting and clearing of rocks supposedly in the name of 'safety works'! Some would argue it is now worse than before in terms of loose rock and erosion at the top as a result of these 'works').

A number of other outcrops near Glasgow were being developed at this time. Close to Auchinstarry, Johnstone and Benn put up **Obelisk (E2 5b)** at Girnel Quarry. At Meikle Ross in the South West of Scotland, a crag which was developed extensively by Glasgow climbers from 1972 to 1977, Johnstone and Benn put up **Sorcerer's Apprentice (VS 4c)** in 1975, and **Bluefinger (VS 4c)** in 1976. At Craigmuschat Quarry in Gourock Johnstone put up most of the routes on the west face of the crag in 1976; and there also he added **Push The Button (E2 5c)** in October 1978.

Dumbarton Rock was fast becoming during this period a kind of 'Black Fontainebleau' for local climbers, and was frequented regularly and developed occasionally by members of the Club. Here Johnstone, with Doug McCallum, put up **Crackerjack (E1 5b)** on the North Face in April 1976. In April 1977 he added **Slainte (E2 5c)**, **Antigrav (E3 6a)** and **Drizzle (HVS 5a)** to either side



Ken Johnstone on the first ascent of **Spacewalk (E5 6b)** on the North East nose of Aonach Dubh, Glen Coe, in April 1978.

Photo: Ken Johnstone.

of his Crackerjack route; and in August the same year he put up **Rough Sea (E1 5a)** (see photo on page 46), a particularly serious pitch on the NW Face of the Rock.

Less significant routes on odd crags here and there were being recorded during this period by members. The Club's **Log Book** (see the 'Extracts' on pages 105 - 118) at the time contained a number of 'Crag Xs' and new routes entries added with tongue in cheek by many members to compliment the details of the more serious pioneering being done elsewhere by the likes of Johnstone.

Dumbarton Rock and the other local Glasgow outcrops were very much regarded then as 'practice grounds', used during weekday evenings mostly, as well as the Hub Climbing Wall in Clydebank where the Lomond Club had a regular weekly booking. The Finnieston Walls, the Kelvin Bridge walls and other man-made wall structures in Glasgow (described well by John 'Spider' McKenzie in 1973*) were popularised also in the 1970s by the active climbers in the area.

[* See '**Glasgow**' by John McKenzie, in **Mirrors In The Cliffs**, Edited by Jim Perrin, Diadem, 1983.]

Nowadays of course, since their extensive development our thanks to the more detailed guidebooks, all these local walls and crags are regular climbing venues most of the year as opposed to being merely practice crags.

Big wall routes in Glen Coe

1977/78 was perhaps the climax of the Club's pioneering activities during this very active period, in terms of the number and significance of new routes by various members on several major crags. The big cliffs of Glen Coe in particular were at this time being investigated by a number of leading climbers, and the active LMC members added some significant first ascents to the area. Quite prominent among them was Ken Johnstone who, of the various active members during these years, it is fair to say made the most important contribution to Scottish climbing at this time. His early exploits were significant. In 1975, at a young age, he had made the 4th known ascent of Whillan's **Carnivore** route; and in 1976 he made the second ascent of **Le Monde (E5 5c)**, a new route established that year on Creag a' Bhancair by Nick Colton which had helped to mark the beginning of the modern development of these big Glen Coe cliffs.

In May 1977 Johnstone made the 3rd joint ascent of **The Clearances (E3 5c)**, accompanying Dave Cuthbertson and Willie Todd on the second pitch after doing the first pitch with John Kerry (another of the local Glasgow outcrops activists). Johnstone recalls this as an extraordinary day and a significant event - he had never met Cuthbertson and Todd before but on that day they all, together with Rab Anderson and Murray Hamilton, had converged on the same route with the same purpose in mind (see

Johnstone's article on page 119). And after that Johnstone of course went on to do a great number of first ascents with Cuthbertson and Todd throughout Scotland in the years that followed.

In June 1977 Johnstone put up **Massacre (E3 6a)**, with Alan Grigg, on the North Face of Aonach Dubh, and **Eldorado (E3 5c)** with Mark Worsley on the same face. Both these new routes typified the big wall climbing activity taking place during this period.

In July 1977 Johnstone made the first free ascent of **Flip Out (E2 5b)**, an old aid route on the left wall of Ossian's Cave on Aonach Dubh, as well as another old aid route called **Bogtrotter (E2 5c)** on the North Buttress of the Buachaille.

The highlight of Johnstone's creations at this time was undoubtedly the now classic **Spacewalk (E5 6b)**, another big wall route on the North East Nose of Aonach Dubh, which he put up with Pete Ogden in April 1978 (see photo on page 49). In May 1978 he added **Sticky Fingers (E3 5c)**, **Layla (HVS 5b)** and **Blockbuster (HVS 4c/5a)** with Pete Greenwell on the same face; **Triceptor (E5 5c/6a)** with Greenwell on the East Face of Aonach Dubh the same month; and **Excellerator (HVS 5a)**, **Trichord (HVS 5a)** and **Dare Devil (E1 5b)** with B. Duff also in May 1978, on Aonach Dubh. In June 1978 with Worsley he added **Serenade (VS)** on one of the many unclimbed parts of The Amphitheatre on Aonach Dubh.

George Christie and Pete Ogden put up **Gutrot (E1 5b)** in July 1978 beside The Gut on the East Face of Aonach Dubh. And in September that year Worsley added **Guinness (HVS 5a)** with Johnstone on the same crag.

In February 1979 Johnstone accompanied Dave Cuthbertson and Willie Todd on **Heart of Glass (IV)**, a prominent winter line just left of Johnstone's own **Blockbuster** route on the Lower NE Nose of Aonach Dubh. With Alan Ramsey in May 1980 Johnstone made the first free ascent of **Angor (HVS 5a)**, a 1966 route on the North Face of Aonach Dubh, adding a new direct finish.

A few other crags were looked at around this time by members. On the Wallace Monument cliffs at Stirling Worsley and R. Allan had put up **Wuthering Heights (HVS)** in April 1978. Allan and M. Geddes established **Ermine Gully (II)** on A'Mhaighdean in Letterewe the same month. In May 1978 A. Campbell and R. Strong put up **Nameless (Severe)** on the East Buttress of Beinn Eighe in Torridon. On Dumbarton Rock in 1978 Worsley had added **Supinator (6a)** to the many boulder problems below the main cliff. On Carn Dearg Buttress of Ben Nevis Johnstone and Todd put up **Adrenalin Rush (E3 6a)** in 1978. At Craigmuschat Quarry Johnstone and Greenwell established **Bright Lights (HVS 5a)** in June 1979, and in September that year added **Cutlass (HVS 5a)** with Grigg. And back at his old stomping ground, Auchinstarry Quarry, Johnstone added **Tit For Tat (E2 5c)** in August 1980.

Also in 1980, Ken Johnstone's own 1977 **Spacewalk** route in Glen Coe, which by then had become a classic, was the subject of a live tv broadcast

when Dave 'Cubby' Cuthbertson and Murray Hamilton were filmed climbing the route.

This wave of climbing and new route pioneering by the Club's active members from 1975 to 1980 on a variety of Scottish crags, on and off the regular pattern of Club meets, marked probably the most intensive and most important period in the Lomond Club's history in terms of its members achievements in climbing. The new routes put up in this time were considerable technical efforts and contributed to the modern development of the local Glasgow outcrops, the Glen Coe cliffs, and to Scottish climbing generally.

Change in Club organisation

Membership of the Club had grown steadily and consolidated throughout this period into a hard core of active climbers, and climbing standards had risen in the Club as a result. From the early 1970s onwards a varied and regular meets programme was developed again, with weekly meets most months of the year to all the popular areas. The Club also built up a fresh library of climbing guidebooks and communal store of equipment. Although there was a predominance of climbers in the Club during this time and few hillwalkers (which had probably been the case anyway in past periods, given the nature of the Lomonds' formative years), the Lomond Club had now survived again to a certain extent as a well-established mountaineering club.

However, a radical change in the organisation of the Club took place in 1975, when fresh ideas about its membership (including bringing its Constitution up to date) and its climbing meets, were put in force by this new generation of climbers. Although the membership had strengthened somewhat, a gradual stagnancy had set in by 1975 due to lack of interest and involvement from members in meets, despite an extensive programme. A regular series of lectures by invited guests (which had been a strong Lomond tradition since the 1940s) had been initiated again in the early 1970s, but this too suffered from lack of interest and had to be abandoned in late 1975.

The Club therefore instigated a series of Club newsletters called '**Outcrop**' (from 1975-76) to stimulate more interest in meets and other sociable Club activities. A few individuals at the time addressed this issue of flagging activity seriously in 1975. Ken Johnstone's climbing activity which was beginning to be noticed by then no doubt also helped to encourage others to be more active. The message got through, and soon those who were seriously interested in preserving a strong Lomond Club, as well as its traditions, pooled their resources and worked again as a close-knit group of keen and active members with an excellent club spirit. A Club **Meets Log Book** was begun in 1975 to encourage members to record details of their climbing activities, and proved to be a success for many years afterwards.

That book has now become a valuable historical Club record, and helped in the preparation of parts of this 60th Anniversary Journal.

Some of the Club's social meets changed also at this time. Disco dances became the fashion, these being arranged regularly to raise funds for a Lomond Club hut which was decided now as a positive long-term aim of the Club. Christmas Dinners were inaugurated at this time, often held at a different nationality of restaurant each season. And the Club's infamous 'curry nights' began in earnest then too. These were all in addition to the traditional annual dinner each year. In one issue of **'Outcrop'** it was noticed that the curry nights were attended with much more enthusiasm than the annual dinner!

As far as climbing on off seasons was concerned, an evening on the local crags or climbing walls, followed by a few beers in a few choice hostelrys in town, finished off in a night club until the early hours, was de rigueur.

This sociable fever in between the climbing had always been an important part of the Lomond Club's (indeed any club's) scene since the early years. These new trends, however, were highlighted at the time by a Christmas meet held at the Kelvin Hall Carnival showground (that which is now held annually in the SECC)!, which was met with "wild approval", and again by one young lady member who invited the Club to her house on Boxing Day to "sample her tea and mincemeat pies." The entries in the Club's **Log Book** at the time give a flavour of the atmosphere and attitudes of the active members of this period (see the **'Extracts'** on page 105 -118).

An attempt was made around 1976 to collect articles for a Club Journal, but there was little response and the idea was shelved until sufficient material or occasion justified it (this special 60th Anniversary Journal is the first since 1957).

It was 1976 when enthusiasm for a Club Hut project picked up again. Jumble sales and disco dances were organised to raise funds. The Club did in fact receive an offer in 1976 of a lease on some land at Laroch just west of Glencoe village. But that option involved erecting a new building on a vacant site and proved too costly for the Club's resources at the time. The Club eventually found a derelict building in 1978 at Onich, which was converted to become the Club's 'Manse Barn Hut' now in use there (see the following section for the development of it).

A large party of Club members attended the Buxton Mountaineering Conference in 1976. Among the speakers there that year was Peter Habeler. And it is said that during question time after his talk George Christie was heard to shout out: "But how many Munros has he done?", but that was lost in the vast expanse of the Buxton Opera House and was never answered.

One member from this period was known for his particularly humorous artistic talent, as well as his climbing - Dougie Benn. In 1978 he had some of his cartoons published in **CRAGS Magazine** (forerunner of **HIGH**), entitled **'Rock Climbing For Beginners'**, and this is reproduced on pages 99 - 104 in

this Journal. Benn produced many other similar cartoons then depicting recognisable members of the Lomond Club, but they were never published anywhere and none could be found for inclusion here (pity). Also, one of his poems (another of his talents), is reproduced in this Journal (page 105).

Publication of SCOTROCK guidebook

The intense period of climbing activity up to 1980 culminated for the Club in the publication by the 'Lomond Climbing Group' (four of the active members at the time) of a rock climbs guidebook covering several Scottish crags - **SCOTROCK*** (1980). This guide was essentially a new routes supplement to existing and inadequate guides, as well as providing information on other previously unpublished areas. Existing guides were long out of date by the late 1970s as a result of the few years of new routes activity, the development of higher standards of climbing and the extensive use of the new technical pitch grades. It was at this time that the SMC refused to accept that there were sufficient climbers active in Scotland in the E grades to justify the use of these grades in any new SMC guides. As a result, when Ken Crocket's 'Glen Coe' guide was published in 1980, as well as being selective it was generally felt by active climbers at the time to be inadequate considering the extent of new route activity and rising standards up until then. The aim of the Lomonds' **SCOTROCK** guide was therefore "to fill a vast information gap on Scottish rock climbing". With several hundred routes included in it, it was a bold effort and may have kick-started the modern trend of updating or supplementing existing Scottish guides more regularly. Rab Anderson and Gary Latter's new routes supplement guide of 1986, for instance, filled a similar gap later.

That Lomond guidebook and the general revival of pioneering climbing activity within the Club from the mid to late 1970s put the Lomond Mountaineering Club back in good standing, as it had been before in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Thus by 1980 the Club was again in high spirits, and has remained so to the present day.

[* **SCOTROCK**, by George Christie, Sandy Johnstone, Ken Johnstone and Peter Ogden; Lomond Climbing Group, 1980.]

1978-1992: THE CLUB HUT AND RECENT ACTIVITIES

By 1978 the Club had achieved a great deal in climbing. But the frustration of never having had its own hut as a base, and the enthusiasm within the membership at that time for such a hut, eventually led to the Club acquiring the lease of its present Manse Barn Hut at Onich. Other Scottish clubs had their own huts in popular areas, and the Lomond Club felt that they certainly deserved something for themselves.

Efforts to acquire a Club Hut

Apart from the few regular dosses which were shared with others in the earlier years, one or two possible buildings in various locations had been looked at over the years. But nothing had ever come of those enquiries except the brief period of use of Cameron's Barn in the late 1960s. That latter place, however, had been shared. Therefore the Club decided in 1975 to make positive efforts to acquire a hut. Having found the building at Onich in 1978, four years of hard work by members at weekends resulted in the official opening of the Manse Barn Hut on 6th September 1982.

Activity in 1978 and 1979 was therefore centred around the setting up of this hut. The building at Onich, a disused barn associated with the Church of Scotland's Manse building across the road (hence the name), was found by George Christie and Ken Johnstone. It was no longer in use for any agricultural purpose, and so had potential for conversion to a hut. After some investigations and negotiation the Club acquired a lease on the building on the understanding it would be repaired and converted to bunkhouse use by the Club and kept in good repair in future years.



Ann Maher, George Christie and Ken Johnstone, (in trench) working on the Club's Manse Barn Hut at Onich in February 1980.

Photo: Ken Johnstone.

Work on Manse Barn

Planning Permission was obtained from the local authority, and plans were drawn up for Building Warrant to carry out the work. Funds were raised partly by holding disco dances, jumble sales and raffles etc from 1975 onwards, and partly from donations from members; but the majority of finance for the expense of the work came in grant assistance from a European Community funding scheme. In all about £1,500 was raised and spent on the work.

All this planning and practical conversion work was done by the keen members who gave up their own time at weekends or during holidays, fitted in between the active climbing mentioned in the previous section. Few of the present members will have much concept or appreciation of the enormous effort and scale of the undertaking involved in establishing the Hut. George Christie and Ken Johnstone were the principal forces behind the work, and the following members must be mentioned for their considerable and continual contributions to the whole project: Willie Johnstone, Bob Nugent, Andy Anderson, Alistair Cameron, Peter Rickus and John Porter.

The building as it was found consisted of four stone walls and a slated roof, with concrete ground floor and rotten timber upper loft floor. There were no windows, only vertical slits in the walls, and the ground floor was a midden, literally, which had to be 'mucked out'. The work began in 1979 and comprised the following items of work:

1. Removing heaps of dung and other debris.
2. Removing rotten timber upper floor.
3. Repairs to roof.
4. Installation of new timber upper floor and stair structures.
5. Installation of new doors and windows.
6. Formation of toilet and sleeping bunks on upper floor.
7. Installation of electrical, plumbing and drainage services, including external septic tank.
8. Installation of kitchen units and other furniture.

In addition to the work done by members on the building itself, the local water department laid a new water mains supply to it, the electricity board laid an electricity supply to it, and the local roads department formed a new pavement access from the nearby Onich Hotel car park. All the work took three years to complete (see the photos on pages 55 and 57).

Some lack of commitment from members to working on the Hut in 1982, and a lack of active members temporarily during this period, delayed the completion of the Hut. Members had to be encouraged to help constantly towards the end. Willie Johnstone recalls that they almost abandoned the project in despair at one point towards the end. But a few keen people

persevered, and the end result of an excellent hut facility made all the effort worthwhile. The Manse Barn Hut is an achievement which the Lomond Club can be extremely proud of, and which the present members should feel fortunate in inheriting. It is the largest undertaking and the most important event outwith climbing in the Club's recent history. At present it represents the Club's most important communal benefit.

Because of all that work on the Hut, mainly by the most active members, climbing activity did decline slightly during the years 1979-82. It was the regular organised meets which suffered most (and may have deterred some new members for a while), whereas the established members continued their climbing and some new route activities (see the new routes listed for the years 1978-80 in the previous section). Among the new routes put up by members during the Hut years since 1980 included: **The Tickle (III)** in January 1981 by John Alcock and Mark Worsley on Beinn Udlaidh on the buttress right of **Central Gully**; and **Southern Freeze (E2 5b)** on the South Peak of The Cobbler in September 1981 by Ken Johnstone and Gordon Pryde.

In this time the general pattern of Club meets had declined as members were committed to working on the Hut most of the year. It was noted by the Club Secretary at the time that the best meet the Club had in 1980 was to the Kendal Mountain Film Festival (which itself was reckoned to be a disaster)! But one other event of importance at this time was of course the



The Club Hut in 1989. Photo: Richard A. Napier

publication of the **SCOTROCK** guidebook in 1980, as mentioned above, which had been in preparation for about a year.

Recent mountaineering activities

After the Hut's completion, however, the frequency of meets resumed its normal pattern. A membership increase was encouraged also, with the newly finished Club Hut as an obvious incentive. Needless to say it has been extensively used by members over the last 10 years as an ideal base for climbing in the Glen Coe and Lochaber area. Popularity in winter climbing particularly increased in the Club owing to the Hut's location. The mid to late 1980s has seen a great deal of winter routes done by members. Glen Coe had always been a regular location for the Lomond Club right from its earliest years, and will now continue to be so all year round as long as the Manse Barn Hut at Onich exists.

Summer rock climbing and meets generally have spread further afield in recent years. The Lake District and North Wales continue to be visited frequently, Yorkshire and the Peak occasionally, and a week-long meet to the Pembroke sea cliffs in September has now become an annual occurrence.



Chris Roper on crux pitch of **Staghorn Gully (111)**, Creag Meagaidh, in March 1988. **Photo: Richard A .Napier.**

Willie Johnstone on
Black and Tan (S),
Bowden Doors,
Northumberland,
September 1988.
**Photo: Richard
Napier.**



Below:
Richard Napier and
Willie Johnstone at
c5400 on
Bhrigupanth
(6772m), Garhwal
Himalaya, India,
September 1989.
Photo:
Elvyn Haigh.



French and Spanish crags are visited each year by some members. Alpine trips have continued to be made, either as large Club parties or smaller trips by pairs. Ski mountaineering in the Alps as well as this country is pursued also. And lately, paragliding has become a 'fringe' activity for keen members wishing to fly.

In general mountaineering, in recent years many members have climbed and trekked in the world's greater mountain ranges, with several expeditions (large and small) being organised by various parties to Kenya, the North American Rockies, and the Himalaya ranges of India, Nepal and Pakistan.

In 1987 a memorial service was held in Glen Coe for Dave Partridge, a former Club member and past President who died prematurely from cancer that year. Dave Partridge was an active member from the mid 1970s, and President from 1976-77 when members were very much involved in the new route scene then (to which he contributed in a modest way). Before he moved to Glasgow and joined the Lomond Club in 1975 he was an active climber and BMC member in England, and for a brief spell around 1974 he contributed a regular column of BMC news, ("**Dave Partridge's Notebook**") in **Mountain Life Magazine**.

It was characteristic of him that in his will he chose the Lomond Club to be responsible for the disposal of his remains: he requested that his ashes be carried by Lomond Club members up a recognised climb in Glen Coe, to be scattered at the top. It was equally characteristic that he provided a sum of £100 in his will for the refreshment of those present on that occasion. The ashes were duly carried up Red Slab on the Buachaille on 21st June, by Trevor Clarke, Elvyn Haigh and Tony Bamforth. Those three were joined on the summit by fourteen other members and friends including Dave's eldest son; and the ashes were scattered after a short ceremony. After descending, the party called in to the Kingshouse for drinks, then finished off the day with a curry back in Glasgow in the best Lomond tradition.

Bothy meets have been a highlight of recent years. On one of those, in May 1988 the Club took part in '**Boots Across Scotland**', the sponsored Munro-climbing charity event which raised over £75,000 to help an injured climber and which set up the Boots Fund which is still operating today for giving out similar aid. Seventeen members gathered at Camban Bothy in Glen Affric on that occasion and covered eleven Munros on the allotted day, a tremendous commitment from a relatively small active membership at the time. The Club took part in the repeat 'Boots' event in June 1992 when twelve members gathered at the Shelter Stone in the Cairngorms and covered six Munros, taking advantage of the excellent dry conditions then to get some climbing done on the surrounding crags during that weekend. The Club was told it had made the largest contribution to the 'Boots' event on both occasions, in terms of the number of Munros covered each time.

New routes activity in recent years

Some new routes activity has been kept up by keen members in the last few years, though this has never been as intensive as the 1970s period or earlier years of the Club. However, some of these new routes include: **Twilight (E2 5b)** on Bishop's Butress on the West Top of Bidean nam Bian in Glen Coe in 1984 by Ken Johnstone and Alan Leary; **Bail Out (E4 6a/b)** at Dunkeld by Alan Leary in 1986; **Slug Death (E2 5b)** and **One Way Trip (E4 6a/b)**, both at Rowardennan Slate Quarry, a new crag by Loch Lomond developed by Leary in 1987; **Pas De Deux (V)** and **Menage a' Trois (V)** on Beinn an Dothaidh in 1986 and 1987 by Dave Saddler and others; **Through The Barricades (E2 5b)** also by Saddler, on Eigg in 1987; **Inglis Clark Ridge (III)** on Sron na Creise in Glen Coe by Richard Napier and Steve Downie in 1987; and **The Board Walk (E3 5c)** at Cambusbarron New Quarry by Chuck Pettigrew and Ron Renwick in 1991.

60th Anniversary celebrations

In 1992 the Lomond Club celebrated its 60th Anniversary. To mark the occasion several events were organised, including a 60th Anniversary Dinner, a historical photo display, and the production of this special Journal.

At the 60th Anniversary Dinner held in April 1992 many past members who could be contacted joined with the current members to celebrate 60 years of the Club, 100 people in all. Several of those were part of the original membership of the 1930s. The dinner was as much a reunion for them and the others from the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s periods. Some of the older folks were quite surprised to learn that the Lomond Club is still going strong in the 1990s when they received their invitations.

The guest speaker invited for that evening was Tom Weir, well known mountaineer, writer and broadcaster. Although never a member of the Club, Tom grew up in the same era as the original Lomonds and accompanied them on many bus runs after the war. He gave an excellent talk on the history of the working-class climbers and clubs of that 1930s period. Tom's article in the June 1992 issue of the **Scots Magazine** is the full text of his speech that night - he said it was the invitation to speak at the dinner which prompted his recollections of those early climbing and dossing days which he spoke of and wrote about in his article.

No Lomond Club meet, climbing or social, is without incident, amusing or otherwise. True to fashion a fire alarm was set off during the speeches at this dinner, which meant that all 100 diners had to file out of the hotel onto Sauchiehall Street to carry on the party there while the hotel staff and fire brigade sorted it out (a false alarm, of course) before everyone filed back in again to hear the rest of the speeches.

The celebration party mood begun in the hotel was carried on until the early hours in one member's flat. Among the traditional debauchery there

was a reunion of the infamous Irish singing duo of Emerson and McGee (witnessed on many occasions in recent years), helped along in typical inebriated Lomond spirits. Drinking time lost in the hotel due to the enforced detour onto Sauchiehall Street was well made up for. Never was there a more fitting end to a Club dinner or celebration of 60 years of Lomond Mountaineering Club traditions.

When the idea of celebrating the Club's 60th Anniversary was mooted in 1991, the idea of a special journal of historical record to mark the occasion was also formed. In the process of sifting through what information was



Tom Weir, Guest Speaker at the Lomond Club's 60th Anniversary Dinner April 1992, talking to Chris Roper.

Photo: Gayle Burton

available, and in contacting past members for the Dinner, much more information and photographs were collected from many people keen to see it all documented for posterity. An exhibition display of most of these photos was mounted and shown at the Anniversary Dinner as well as several other Club meetings throughout 1992. A film show was held to show the videos of old cine films of Lomond meets. And the 60th year was rounded off with the usual round of autumn social events: the Annual Dinner was held at the Clachaig Inn in Glen Coe; the members' Slide Show was held in Susan Wood's house, with the usual entertainment of

members' climbing activities; and the Christmas Dinner was a curry in Glasgow.

And last but not least, this special 60th Anniversary Journal has occupied much members' time and effort in its preparation during 1992, with considerable help from both past and present members. Publication was planned for late 1992, but as it turned out to be bigger and better than expected, the process took longer, so it was finally produced in June 1993.

Nabaz Malaly

As is mentioned in the dedication at the front of this Journal, the Club was saddened very recently by the tragic death of Nabaz Malaly, a well loved Club member. Only 40, Nabaz had packed a great deal into his life, much of it for the benefit of his fellow Kurdish people, as he had endeavoured to help relieve their suffering. He was always keen to lend a hand on Club meets giving instruction to others in recent years. This and his intense enthusiasm for the sport will be a lasting memory of Nabaz for us. And also as mentioned in the dedication, we should not change our attitudes to mountaineering despite his tragic accident, as he would want the Club to continue its pursuit of the sport as eagerly as he did. A ceilidh is to be held in July this year in remembrance of him.

SUMMARY

The Lomond Club has been successful in its 60 years of existence, in that it has survived as a club benefiting its members in general, having been through a middle period of quiet years in the mid 1960s when it almost fizzled out completely; in that it has always managed to represent the diversity of interests amongst its members since the early years; and also in that it has always had a few pioneering climbers who have pursued the sport to hard extremes with significant first ascents of summer and winter routes. Johnnie Harvey, the Club's founder, actively encouraged new route activity and exploration of remote areas. That particular trait still exists in the Club today.

The Lomond Club in those respects is no different necessarily from any other active and well-attended mountaineering club. It is probably the diversity of members and their activities, and the sociable comradeship amongst them, which made the Lomond Club what it was, and still is. That diversity and strength is something else which still exists in the Club today.

Above all, the Club has always been a collection of people who have pursued their sport of mountaineering in their own way, to make of it what they can and wish. It has given novices the opportunity to take up with more confidence, more frequency, aspects of the sport which they may only have touched on before. The spirit of sharing of ideas, sharing of opportunities and information, of comradeship, which a club can inevitably

give, has always to some degree been fulfilled by the Lomond Club. Should the Club survive another 60 years, I hope members will endeavour to preserve that spirit while climbing and making of the Club what they can and wish.

I take my hat off to Johnnie Harvey and his contemporaries, to those who have carried on the Lomond Club's traditions and climbing activities up to the present, and to those who might do so in the future. As activities and membership dwindled up to the early 1960s, Harvey must have wondered what future lay ahead for the Lomond Club. He would be proud, I am sure, and perhaps also quietly amused, to know that his legacy has endured.



Lomond Club Day meet on Stob Coire nan Lochan, Glen Coe, 12 January 1992.

Photo: Richard Napier,

Left to right: Ken Coates, Nabaz Malaly, Richard Napier, Sharon Lowe, John Porter, Rod Geddes, Jon Slowe, Allan May, Susan Wood, Stephen Mercer, Isobel Wilson, Dave Wood, Richard Blackmore, Chris Roper; **Knealing:** Gayle Burton and John McLaughlin.

The Club in 1993

Today the familiar pattern of meets to popular areas as well as jaunts to remoter areas, established in the last 20 years, continues. Membership of the Club has increased steadily up to the present, reaching a peak of 71 members in 1991, with still over 60 this year.

In the last couple of years many new members have joined, adding fresh blood again to the Club's pursuance of mountaineering - and sociable interludes - and helping to carry on its traditions, its meets, and above all its characteristic club spirit. Today in 1993 the Lomond Mountaineering Club is still functioning well and is as active as ever in all aspects of mountaineering.

Long may it continue!

Richard A. Napier, May 1993

IN RETROSPECT (1946)

Recollections of the 'dosses' and 'howffs' north of Glasgow used by the working-class climbing generation of the late 1920s and early 30s by BILL WALKER

During almost five years of army life, billets were so many and so varied (slit trenches, bell tents, Nissen Huts, cottages and mansions), my kit so heavy and cumbersome, my companions so similarly clad, that I could not but compare them with the dosses, packs and pals of earlier and happier times. I remembered old dosses and 'howffs' long since forgotten, packs long since discarded and companions long since vanished.

I was back again in the year 1926, with a small pack, an old much worn army blanket, and with just enough food for one day (the pack would not hold any more). Without present day luxuries, I hiked from the tram terminus at Killermont, through Milngavie, over the Stockie, via the pipe track or Drymen to Ben Lomond on the Saturday, and back again on the Sunday. In that short journey we had the choice of anything up to a dozen different 'dosses'. Some of the old members will no doubt remember them - Croftamie, the old "Paddy Hat" shed to the right of the Balmaha road, the pier shed at Rowardennan, the Wash-house at Ptarmigan Lodge on Loch Lomond (where it was rumoured that you left 10 shillings or a Pound to pay the fine), Rowchoish, and Cailness.

If you preferred the Aberfoyle side there was the hut on the Pipe Track, an old shepherd's house, Stronmacnair, and Comer. Every Ben had its 'howffs'. The Cobbler at Arrochar with its shelter stone and caves; Coiregrogan and Loch Sloy House. Ben Venue had Glasshoile, The Trossachs Pier Shed, and on several occasions the steamer itself. The Callander Ben Vorlich had Arrivuriardich, Sron Eader a' Chin and Dubh Choirean, the latter reduced to a ruin one Spring holiday by vandals. It was mostly in inclement weather that these 'howffs' were used, for in good dry weather, unmindful of the temperature, a night spent under the open skies was the rule. There were recognised spots where we were never disturbed - Ross Point, Inchcaillach, and especially the woods outside Drymen where we once spent a night so cold that despite a fire of bonfire dimensions not an animal stirred from the shelter of the fire and the birds were frost-numbered into huddled silence, ourselves included.

From these 'dosses' and 'howffs' I have watched the last departing rays of sinking sun, watched the stars rising, in the stillness of the night. At the midnight hour when all seems to be sleeping I have watched the nocturnal wanderings of the fox, heard the splashing of the otter in its mountain pool, and heard the scream of the rabbit caught by the weasel. The first faint streak of rosy light in the east, the fading stars and the gradual revealing of the earth's secrets in the light of the returning sun has ever been a wonder of which I have never tired.

As for the frequenters of these howffs, it is to their credit that no single act of vandalism can be laid at their door. One lad worked in a music shop in Glasgow until 9 o'clock on Saturday night, and every Sunday without fail he crawled into one of these 'dosses' more dead than alive, having walked all the way from Glasgow to as far as Aberfoyle. His arrival was generally greeted with groans for there was no sleep for inhabitants until he had drummed up. One night or morning he lit a fire in the barn at Stronmacnair and after drumming up threw an old packsheets over the fire. He left hurriedly as we scrambled out looking for both air and revenge.

If my memory plays me correctly, it was around about 1930 that someone lit a fire by the side of Craigallion Loch and no matter the time of day you cared to pass, the fire was burning, and it remained thus until the outbreak of the Spanish-Italian-German War (1936) when so many of the fire-watchers disappeared in the turmoil of conflict, that one night the fire died out and was never rekindled.

The 'dosses' and 'howffs' have gone, the men who frequented them and in some cases built them have gone too, and with them a spirit of comradeship which I am afraid can never be recaptured.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.8, August 1946

NOT SO FAR AWAY PLACES (1957)

More reflections on the 1930s era

by CALUM FINLAYSON

We started first on the Campsies or the Whangie, with our first ascents of Jenny's Lum or the climbs at Ross Point and Slack Dhu. We walked the pipe track from Drymen to Duchray and climbed Ben Lomond from Comer, or did Ben Venue and Lomond in one day.

Perhaps it was the prevailing economic conditions that led me and my contemporaries to start our pilgrimages to the mountains at the Hillfoot tram car terminus. The extent of our wanderings was not only limited by time but by the state of our finances.

Our knowledge of the country, the 'dosses', the camp spots - from the forestry hut on the west side of Loch Goil to the doss at Dubh Choirean at the foot of Ben Vorlich above Callander - was intimate and full. A much greater use was made then of the dosses, be they howffs, caves or overhangs. This approach to the mountains was more or less an apprenticeship.

While our journeys started at Hillfoot or Milngavie, I have on occasions walked with Jock Nimlin across the bracken path from Milngavie and the same evening have seen him tapping a lift across Loch Lomond at Rowardennan.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.15, Spring 1957

TOWER RIDGE: 5TH APRIL, 1936. From A Diary (1945)

by JOHN B. NIMLIN

The Tower Ridge loomed against the slowly-drifting clouds. Two thousand feet of rock, snow and ice mounting in curving aretes and steep towers to the long snow-waves of the summit cornices.

It was 11am when we started to cut steps on the approach slopes to its western side, and it was 3pm when we reached the top of the Little Tower. In the snowy conditions of early April this represented fast progress, and every step of the way had been a pure joy in the sunshine and frosty calm of a peerless climbing day. Bob Peel, my companion, was delighted with his first visit to the Ben, but with the conditions and the probability that this was the first ascent of the season, it was impossible for a climber to feel otherwise. But once on top of the tower, this carefree atmosphere began to fade. Here, at a great distance from the summit, the nose of the ridge which is comfortably roomy in summer had narrowed to a crest of iron-hard snow.

Progress was now much slower, but we climbed the slopes below the Great Tower, and reached the position of a terrace which makes a fine lunching-place in summer. Alas for our hopes of a resting-place! The terrace was obliterated by a steep cone of long-accumulated snow which gave the place a most inhospitable look, and we moved on to the start of the Eastern Traverse.

Our first view of the traverse was far from encouraging and Bob, seeing it for the first time, deemed it impossible; but time was too precious for an investigation of alternate routes and we started step-cutting along the ledge. The sensational corner of the traverse was reached by a line of nicks across a hanging band of snow, and turning it one had a dizzy glimpse of snow walls and an ice-fall far below. At the end of the ledge was the ice-crust slab leading up to the Arch, but of the Arch itself there was no other sign than a mass of bulging snow which merged into the wall of the Tower. Here we found our long axes to be very awkward indeed but every hold had to be freed of the encasing nieve and it was a long time before we gained the level summit of the Tower.

The first thing we noticed on arrival was a circular hollow in the snow formed by the radiation of sunrays from the cairn marking the top. It was a little island of security among the encircling downfalls of crag and snow, and we slipped into it gladly for a smoke and a sandwich. As we lay and watched our smoke wreaths curling in the amazingly calm air of 4,000 feet above sea level, we heard the measured swishing of an ice-axe in action. We had been hearing it for hours without seeing any other signs of life, but there was no time for investigation as night was drawing near and we were already nine hours out from our camp in Glen Nevis.

The moment we started to walk along the crest of the wall which joins the Tower to its parent crag we both developed acute cramp in the thighs. The long strain of climbing on the forepart of the feet had caused a tension on certain muscles and the change of angle was bringing its reaction.

As we approached the Tower Gap our progress must have looked grotesque and I remember sliding along on one knee and trailing a rigid leg, when suddenly a call drifted down and drew our attention to a pair of muffled figures above a cornice. I think they were Bell and Allan of the SMC and I believe they had just finished the first ascent of Zero Gully, which explained the mysterious step-cutting. I also think they made some humorous remarks about our slow progress and I certainly remember answering them with a string of curses trailing off into a groan. Then they vanished and left the darkening cornices to the advancing night and the whisper of rising spindrift.

In the tense crossing of the Gap our cramp was soon forgotten, but I remember making a futile grasp at my woollen helmet which dived into the ice-chute of the West Chimney then shot out for a greater plunge to its resting-place 1,500 feet below. One part of my brain was left to figure out the relative speeds of a balaclava and a falling body while the other directed my efforts on the ice beyond the Gap.

On the slopes above the Gap we paused to watch the afterglow of a splendid sunset, but night was creeping into the corries and bringing a sombre impressiveness to the great crags and we turned again to our step-cutting. We now felt that mounting tension which comes on certain climbs and we knew it would not reach its climax until the last angle gave way to the level planes of the summit. It was a state induced by the seemingly endless snowslopes. Every slope plunged over to the dim corries. Every little level and friendly projection was sheathed in snow and ice and moulded into the universal sweep of the slopes, and every nerve and muscle was strained to oppose it. Yet we spoke only of our hunger, of the long overnight car journey before us, and of the cold, incandescent effect of the moonlight as it crept down the snows of the North East Buttress.

At length we reached the final obstacle, the ice-filled scoop leading to the small cornice which often forms above the Tower Ridge. In summer it is an easy scramble but in three winter ascents I have found it to be the crux of the climb. We climbed it slowly and carefully and nothing was heard but the rustling of drift and ice fragments and the curses of the second man when an odd sliver went inside his collar.

Then the leader stepped from the vertical to a slope of no more than fifteen degrees, and it was over. In a few moments all tension was gone. We stood and looked over the crags with complete detachment. Then we raced over the snowslopes and glissaded wildly down the Red Burn towards the friendly lights of Fort William. We were conscious only of a grand elation and in no way disposed to sort out the conflicting elements which gave it birth.

It was sufficient that the moon was shining across the homeward path and painting its magic across the hills and glens. And if anything clouded our minds, it was no more than the thought of starting a well-frozen Austin into life again.

**from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.7,
November 1945**

THE LEGEND OF CHARLIE FLEE-ON McATEER AND DANNY LONE-CYCLIST McGOV (1939)

A tale of the famous Lomond Club bus

by BILL WASSELL

Alexanders are proud of their driver's skill
And Lawsons know how to steer,
But the best of the pile, ninety miles round Carmyle,
Is Charlie Flee-On McAteer.

If you wanted a bus without any fuss,
Would take you some place far or near,
The man you required was that driver inspired,
Charlie Flee-On McAteer.

Many arguments rage in this world today,
No less 'mongst the boys who can shove,
But all are agreed that the best man at speed
Is Daniel Lone Cyclist McGov.

He could ride on for hours at twenty or more,
Do all of it just for pure love,
He was quite a king, in his own little ring,
Was Daniel Lone Cyclist McGov.

These two boys they made quite a noise
Discussing and arguing blind,
Till we said why not hold a race on the spot,
For yours and our peace of mind.

One fine Saturday we all drove away,
Passed Danny and gave him a cheer,
But Danny was fly, used the suction caused by
The bus of C. McAteer.

But on a steep hill wee Danny fared ill,
The bus flew away like a dove,
And looking far back there was no sign alack,
Of Danny Lone Cyclist McGov.

According to custom we drew up at Luss,
For the thirst of the dry Mountaineer,
While there we remained well wee Danny gained
On Charlie Flee-On McAteer.

Four hours on end our elbows did bend,
Said Charles: "By the heavens above,
If you don't stop that booze we are going to lose
To Danny Lone Cyclist McGov."

We sped up the road, a hilarious load,
Expecting McGOV to appear.
It was that beer's fault, for again we did halt
Our driver Flee-On McAteer.

The headlights went out and we hit something hard
As we flew around a blind curve,
And Charlie said: "If wee Danny got that biff,
That's the end of Lone Cyclist McGov."

"But shouldn't you stop to see what you've done?"
Someone cried out from the rear.
"We'll be much too late if we stop and wait,"
Said Charlie Flee-On McAteer.

We got to Glen Coe with no sign of our Dan,
When we heard a shout from above -
On the roof rather bruised and a bit roughly used
Sat Daniel Lone Cyclist McGov.

THE DRYMEN SONNET (1940)

by DAVIE CLARK

When winter snows on Drymen Square do fall,
And 'Achray' winds knock loudly on the door,
When rucksacks thump against the 'Clachan Wall',
And clinker nails plough up the barrom floor,
When backroom solos burst into a howl,
As tipsy tenors try to make the grade,
And paunchers on their merry round do prowl.
Applying all the technique of their trade,
Till music drowns beneath a dreadful blare,
And dreamy dancers waltzing round in 'Crows';
Hear 'Gregalach' come crashing through the air,
The old grey Gods look down with mild surprise,
And envy us, this hikers paradise.

CLUB MEETS DURING THE WAR: 1943-1945

Extracts from the Lomond Club Journals, March 1944-September 1945

New Year 1943/44: Lochnagar

This meet began by separating. Three parties set off from Ballater on Hogmanay, and it was New Year's Day before all joined forces. The 'doss' was a garage loft, and that evening evaporated with the folks' money on the card games. During the evening a friend of Alf Slack's walked across the trapdoor, which unfortunately was open, and this gentleman fell 10 feet to the cobbles below, but luckily broke no bones, although he was unable to climb the next day.

from LMC JOURNAL No.1, March 1944

New Year 1943/44: Bridge of Orchy

Johnnie Harvey and a friend spent New Year's night under canvas at Cononish intending big things in the Lui Gully. The night was wild with high wind and driving rain but to quote Harvey, "The Lomond Alpine Tents stood the test." The next day the weather remained the same so this party beat a rapid retreat to Alf Slack's cottage at Bridge of Orchy.

Here they joined Jock and Jenny Nimlin and Jimmie and Maisie Haining. Trouble arose when they eventually bedded down on the floor: hungry rats descended upon these unfortunate climbers until some member with commendable foresight stuffed food down the rat holes and order was restored.

Nimlin cryptically described this weekend as one of "big feeds."

from LMC JOURNAL No.1, March 1944

February 1944: Ben Lui

A jovial and hopeful band loaded with skis, ice-axes and all the paraphernalia that is synonymous with snow, set off for this ever popular mountain. The snow level was found to be at 2,000 feet, somewhat disappointing for the skiers who, nevertheless, carted and pulled their skis up the South Ridge of Lui, where in the end they were abandoned and the party traversed into the Central Gully, and with good snow and an ice pitch at the top the climb was an excellent one.

from LMC JOURNAL No.1, March 1944

29th-30th April 1944: The Cobbler

On Saturday 29th April Alf Slack and a friend, and Archie Kay, made their way to that evergreen of mountains - The Cobbler. The weather was fine, and after pitching their tents at the Shelter Stone the party then proceeded to climb

the South Peak by the Jug Handle route, and continued to the Needle and the North Peak thus traversing the whole ridge.

Sunday was occupied in climbing the Recess Route. Later that night Archie Kay and Robbie Hutchieson (who had arrived on the Saturday) climbed the Spearhead Arete on Narnain in a howling wind. Kay afterwards remarked he was never so glad to get off a climb in all his life, and has now a little more respect for climbs classed Moderate in a high wind.

from LMC JOURNAL No.2, July 1944

Summer 1944: Skye

The summer holidays this year saw most of the members in Skye, and all had much better weather than is usually associated with it. The first contingent consisted of Danny McGOV, Tommy McKee, Archie Kay, A. Hutchieson, David Easson and Peter McGeoch. The weather during the first part of the holiday was definitely hostile, and was spent on the Cioch, a miserable wet day with a bitter wind which made goose pimples stand out like seracs.

The party made trips to Rhum and Eigg by motor boat. The return journey from Rhum is worthy of note in as much as it consisted of five and a half hours of wallowing about in dense mist with peregrinations to the Point of Sleat, round the coastline of Loch Slapin and Loch Scavaig between the Isle of Soay and Skye, and then eventually back into Loch Brittle. En route the boatmen had produced a small pocket compass and placed it on top of the engine. Due consideration was given to the erratic action of the compass, after which, with the same lofty contempt which some of us show for this instrument, they pocketed it again and continued on their way navigating by instinct.

Harry and Flo Grant and a friend on the Sunday dashed up Coire na Banachdich, ascended the Window Buttress, continued along the ridge to Sgurr Dearg, then ascended the Inaccessible Pinnacle. The following day the party tackled the Cioch Direct, which proved quite strenuous.

Tuesday by common consent was to be a rest day, so the party went round with other members to Loch Coruisk by motor boat. Unfortunately someone brought a rope - "just in case" - and at 3pm the members started up the slabs of the Dubhs Ridge. It gave excellent scrambling from the shores of Loch Coruisk to the summit of Sgurr Dubh Beag at 2,420 feet. The party continued over Sgurr Dubh Mor and Sgurr Dubh na Da Bheinn to the Tearlaich-Dubh Gap. After negotiating the Gap the party descended the Alasdair Stone Shoot to Coire Lagan. Some rest day!

from LMC JOURNAL No.3, September 1944

New Year 1944/45: Stob Gabhar

On Saturday 30th December a party of eight members took the early train to Bridge of Orchy. At daybreak the effects of an early rise were

banished by a sudden view of snow-clad peaks. This foreknowledge of good climbing conditions put a spring into the heavy heels of the caravan, and a triumphant squeak into the wheels of Dorothy Nimlin's pram, during the march to Loch Tulla!

Camp was pitched in the hollow of the well-known fir planting and the remainder of the day was passed in fire-tending, drumming up and a visit to Inveroran tavern.

An early rise on the 31st was rewarded by a rosy glare on the high snowfields, and the party set out for Stob Gabhar. The snow was perfect for step-cutting, but so hard that 500 feet of alternate cutting and vigorous kicking were necessary to reach the foot of the Upper Couloir. The Couloir was in fine shape, with only a few feet of the cave pitch showing above the deep snow. The ice on the upper pitch was thick enough to hold roomy steps and there was no sign of cornicing at the exit, but with a party of seven climbing as a single team it was not possible to make fast progress.

From the icy shadows of the gully wistful glances were cast on the sun-washed ridges. But soon the sun had made its cycle, reddened to a wild setting and vanished into the cold mists of evening. It was nightfall before the summit was reached.

As the party left the hillsides and joined the rough road to Victoria Bridge, an extra ingredient was added to an already loaded platter by a shooting brake which drew along out of the darkness of the night and carried the party right to the camp spot. The theory that the driver was the local Laird and the owner of the fir planting is mainly discredited by hard experience. More likely it was Santa Claus on a late delivery.

Newcomers to the camp that night were Johnnie Harvey and a friend, who later joined their voices to the dirge of "Somebody's Baby Who Is Not Your Own" with which the old year was ushered out. New Year came in with spirits evoked on bended knees from Publicans and Sinners and somewhat rough on the craws of an honest man. Then came the dawn with no-one in the mood to greet it, followed by two days of eating, sleeping, fire-tending and dodging the frequent showers. What more could man desire?

from LMC JOURNAL No.4, January 1945

New Year 1944/45: Kinlochewe

Two parties headed for Kinlochewe, intending to meet up together, but they had contrasting experiences:

W. Gordon, T. McGuinness and some friends arrived at Kinlochewe on Saturday 29th December and spent the first night in a sawmill. The following day, in perfect weather, the party climbed one of the peaks of Beinn Eighe. A 500 feet glissade on the descent made a perfect finish to the day. The weather now broke, and although the next two days were spent on Beinn Eighe the

climbs were not completed owing to heavy mist and blizzards. On the Tuesday this party returned to their camp by Loch Maree soaked through, to find their two tents and all their equipment (with the exception of a little food) burned to the ground. The accident was doubtless caused by a spark from the big fire they had left burning. That night was spent most uncomfortably in a boat shed. They set out for Glen Coe the next day still wearing the same wet clothes. From Glen Coe Youth Hostel two days later they made for the Aonach Eagach, but after floundering for three hours in very soft snow they abandoned the attempt. Snow continued to fall and the buses were unable to get through the glen. It was Monday of the following week before this party arrived home in Glasgow to start the difficult task of acquiring new climbing gear.

The other party, Flo and Harry Grant, left Glasgow on New Year's morning to meet Gordon and McGuinness at Kinlochewe. When they arrived a sleety drizzle was their only welcome, so they set off towards Torridon. As though to compensate for the lack of a welcome the Fates planted an empty house right in their path, so they took possession, naturally. At breakfast next morning, to their great surprise, a car stopped outside the house. Harry Grant, hurriedly assuming his best diplomatic manner, hastened to explain their intrusion to the driver who, it turned out, was the Gamekeeper. Imagine their surprise when, instead of being ordered out, they were told to stay as long as they pleased and given the key of the coal cellar! This was followed by a pressing invitation to dinner that evening, which was repeated and accepted every night of their stay. The Keeper even sent a car for them on one occasion. In addition to all this, they were brought eggs and milk for breakfast each morning!

from LMC JOURNAL No.4, January 1945

April 1945: Lake District

W. Gordon and T. McGuinness (having acquired gear again) snatched a few days in April to climb in the Lake District. The difficulties of travel were overcome in time honoured Lomond manner, and although changes were frequent the journey was finally accomplished. Together with some members of the Fell & Rock Club they climbed Kern Knotts Crack and Chimney, followed up with an ascent of the Eastern Buttress. Tophet Bastion was also climbed. They rounded off the day by descending the Needle Ridge then climbing the Napes Needle, before hurrying back down to Seathwaite.

The following day, after two hours of steady slogging, the party reached the foot of Moss Ghyll on Scafell. The Gully, which was in a dry condition, was climbed in three hours.

Next day was spent exercising their thumbs again on the way back to Glasgow.

from LMC JOURNAL No.6, September 1945

THE FIRST BUS RUN (1945)

On the Buachaille at the end of the Second World War

by FLO GRANT

The first bus run since 1941 coincided with a weekend buzzing with rumours of the coming peace.

On August 11th we were once again assembled at Clydeside. Four years had elapsed since we had last met there but, apparently, we had not changed much. Perhaps our climbing gear looked a little the worse of wear, our boots clumsier with their British clinkers, and even the bus a rather shabby substitute for our luxury pre-war model.

But these things mattered little. Our real concern was for the spirit of the Club, that spirit of comradeship which had transformed the bus runs of 1939 into communal adventures to the hills. Had it survived?

The long awaited approach of peace inevitably led to comparison with that memorable run to Glen Coe on September 2nd 1939. We recalled old friends who had been with us then. A few we hope to welcome back soon. Many would never share our weekends again.

As we luxuriated in the comfort of easy travel, the miles slipped past. Loch Lomond lay before us looking her loveliest for the occasion. Soon the Loch was behind us. A welcome stop for refreshments at Crianlarich, the inevitable thrill of turning into the Glen Coe road at Tyndrum, and we were on the 'home stretch'. At the Glen Etive road we tumbled out and there was the Buachaille in all its majesty. We had arrived!

Hopes were high for a large camp-fire and sing-song as we hastened across the moor to the old campsite by the river. Presently the site was engulfed in billows of smoke amidst which we fumbled with streaming eyes to erect our tents. Wheezing and choking, we cooked a scrap of supper before retreating to the haven of the tents.

Awakening to a dream day of cloudless skies we did not tarry at the camp site. The moor was dotted with figures, most of us on our way to renew acquaintance with the Crowberry. It was a day for leisurely climbing and sunning on ledges and we didn't mind queuing to go round Abraham's or Greig's. The opportunities thus afforded for a smoke and a 'blether' were not overlooked.

Crowberry Tower was hardly adequate for the crowd which had collected there, and as we chatted we felt that the 'good old days' had indeed come back. A few enthusiasts carried on to the summit, the rest quickly descended the Curved Ridge to the cool balm of the river pool. Here was the climax of a perfect day, a day recaptured from the past, the sum of our hopes for four years.

Many of us had planned to stay a few days more if peace was announced, but we were to be disappointed. Those of us who had been in Glen Coe when war was declared felt that this was the place to celebrate

peace. Regretfully, we left for home still vainly hoping for news that we could stay. The bus must have sensed our feelings for she baulked at the hill before Crianlarich. After some persuasion she started off, carrying us triumphantly home on top gear.

from **THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.6,**
September 1945

RETURN TO THE HILLS (1945)

by **SAM DRYSDALE**

Not the least attractive feature of mountaineering is the pleasure to be derived from it both in prospect and in retrospect. During four years in a flat land most of my climbing was on this plane. Many were hills reclaimed in imagination and even more numerous were the expeditions planned for the future.

The 6.10 train to Spean Bridge seemed a grand way of renewing acquaintance with old friends. The Arrochar Hills, Ben Lomond, the Crianlarich massif, all recall grand days in fair weather and many more in wind and rain. Ben Lui showed itself for a fleeting glimpse before the line, deep in the shadow of Beinn Odhair, swung away towards the Moor of Rannoch.

This wild expanse, purple and brown in its autumn garb with here and there the golden shingle of a tiny lochan, on its borders the Mamores and on the east a myriad of peaks with Schiehallion prominent; it was at its most attractive with cloud shadows chasing each other across its surface.

With a backward glance at the Aonachs and Nevis, we took the long road up Glen More, Glen Garry and then Glen Shiel, with their guardian hills beguiling the long miles to Kyle where the low sun lit up the fretted peaks of the Cuillin. Despite the rough road, the ride into Glen Brittle was accomplished safely and enjoyably.

The next ten days are ten of the most delightful in my memory - golden days when to be out, either on the beach, on the hills or sailing over the sun-flecked sea with the outer isles purple-black on the horizon, was life itself. Coruisk on a brilliant day when the silence was almost terrifying, or a wild day on the ridge with the mist boiling up out of Coruisk like some devil's brew, are but two of the memories of that holiday.

from **THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.7,**
November 1945

PIONEERING ROUTES (1945)

by **JOHN B. NIMLIN**

The pioneering of a difficult route is, I believe, the best experience in rock climbing. To climb any established route, especially a difficult one, is always a source of satisfaction, and to climb it in conditions not prescribed for it, such as wind, snow or ice, is even more satisfying; but neither can match the deep satisfaction one feels on a first ascent when all difficulties are over and only easy rocks lie ahead.

At such a time one knows the feeling of the early climbers when the opportunities seemed endless. Indeed as opportunities become fewer it is more likely that these feelings are intensified whether the route is on the South Face of the Matterhorn or on a few hundred feet of one's native crags. To climb where no-one has gone before is always fascinating.

At the present time, however, it seems to be the custom to open a guidebook, select carefully a detailed route and follow the instructions as one might follow a recipe. From experience I know that this is admirable, but isn't there something missing, some necessary element known only to the pioneer?

Shouldn't the ideal climber's guide emphasise the 'possibilities' and let the established routes rest upon their cairns and well-trodden ways? There are still considerable areas of unclimbed crags in Scotland which will be explored sooner or later. I have memories of crags climbed as yet only in imagination, and of others vainly attempted and quitted only with unquenched ambition. There is a natural inclination to keep one's hopes and aspirations under one's hat, and the more I think of it the more I agree with this attitude.

At the same time I emphasise my first point regarding the great merits of pioneering...worth considering by anyone who may seek that extra ingredient not contained in the guidebook recipe.

from **THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.6,**
September 1945

THE CHASM (1946)

An early repeat ascent of the *Clachaig Gully* in Glen Coe
by **WILLIE RUSSELL**

On Sunday 13th May, 1946, Ronnie Young and I set off for the Clachaig Chasm. We were told that it was too wet. Others thought that we would definitely require 'rubbers'. With such advice ringing in our ears we were in some doubt about the likely result of this climb.

The first few pitches went without much trouble, but with the Great Cave pitch things took on a different aspect. Several attempts just to the right of the watercourse failed on the greasy holds. We tried further to the right where, with

the aid of a small hold, we managed to make progress up a crack to some small trees. By using these admirable jug-handles we moved to the left to a point 20 feet above the pitch. We then traversed a sloping wall some 6 feet wide on one good foothold to a nasty greasy gully, and another delicate traverse landed us back at the watercourse. Another few straightforward pitches and we came to grips with the 50-foot wall, the Jericho Wall.

After an abortive attempt on the left wall we again tackled it on the right. Although appearing very loose, this wall, apart from a few detachable jug-handles, is remarkably sound. We climbed the wall for some distance and then traversed back to the watercourse. The few short pitches that followed were by no means easy, but soon we arrived at the Red Chimney. It is well broken up and at first glance looked fairly easy, but turned out to be a mass of loose stones. We attacked it on the left of the watercourse, and on small holds climbed to the overhang. I led on, and on the ascent of this pitch Ronnie became the target for a veritable hail of boulders of all shapes and sizes, and so monotonous did it become that I ceased to apologise. Traversing to the right below the overhang, which seemed very insecure, and by the judicious use of a good handhold on the other side of the watercourse and some pressure holds, we managed over the lip.

We were by this time feeling the strain of the climb, and at the small pitch which followed the Red Chimney I took the safest route - right up the watercourse. This involved a thorough soaking and as much determination as we could muster before we were able to step on to the heather at the top. We heaved a great sigh and wondered why we tackle such things. I felt as if I had been used as a football, and ached in every muscle. But later, when members asked, "How far up did you get?", we were able to reply, "We finished it!" That was ample compensation.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.8, August 1946

FORBIDDEN ISLAND (1948)

Climbing on Rhum in 1946

by JOHN B. NIMLIN

The Island of Rhum is forbidden to tourists, but since the Prevention of Cruelty Act no-one who has once gained a footing thereon may be forcibly ejected. A party of us landed there in July 1946, but for several good reasons I do not propose to make public our way of getting there. Let us say that we copied Sinbad and flew over on a roc. A big powerful roc - for our party comprised Duncan McGeoch (2 years old), Dorothy Nimlin (3 1/2), Bill Walker, Dave Easson, Ben Humble, Peter and Chris McGeoch, John and Jenny Nimlin, and our mountainous baggage (which included four tents, ranging from a 'tinker' to a baby marquee, seven hefty rucksacks, and a pram!).

We landed at noon on a fresh sunny day and found a perfect campsite on the shores of Scresort Bay, a level sward of short grass half circled by a wood of pine and alder overlooking a pebble beach. Above the wood rose the green foothills, and beyond them, partly veiled in mist, loomed the unknown mountains.

Our total food supply was what we carried in our rucksacks. All reserves had been sent direct to Glen Brittle on Skye, and in three days we would join the Soay fishing boat for the crossing to Skye. We therefore had two full days, and the half days of our arrival and departure, in which to explore the island. But as luck would have it, our two full days were spent in camp listening to the incessant pattering of rain. Thus my hurried impressions of this fascinating island were gained on two strenuous half-day visits to the mountains.

On the afternoon of that first day Dave, Peter, Ben and I set out for Barkeval, and the first impression was gained from the slopes above Coire Dubh on the north side of the mountain. Below us in the wide green corrie there was a rich patchwork of sunshine and shadow, and a cluster of tiny hill lochans kept flashing from grey to blue to silver in the changing light.

The hillside above was now broken by an expanse of terraced crags all lined like a great rock garden with cushions of mountain plants, and our way up to the summit which is just under 2,000ft was full of interest. The view from this top commands all the main peaks on the island, and despite the mist which was down to almost 2,000ft, it was a very striking scene. We could see a wide saddle linking our peak with Allival, and the long serrated ridge between Allival and Askival. Beyond them, and severed by the deep trough of Glen Dibidil, was the separate massif of Trallval, Ashval and Sgurr nan Gillean.

We headed across for the rocky cone of Allival, and leaving Ben to make the complete ascent, the rest of us contoured round to the North Ridge of Askival. This is a fine mountain feature, and on it we climbed over rock towers and slender aretes composed of excellent gabbro. On its west side also the ridge has enough unclimbed grooves and cracks to fill a guidebook, although few of the courses would exceed 150ft of continuous rock. And on its east side,

overlooking Coire Ghrunnd, the ridge is regrettably accessible by easy grass gullies.

The summit of Askival, 2659 feet, is the highest point on Rhum, but we were again denied an extensive view by the persistent mist. When Ben rejoined us we descended into Coire Ghrunnd. This is one of the most attractive corries I have ever seen, and a splendid setting for a mountain camp. It has all the best features of a corrie - a splendid outward view of sea, island and distant mountains, a finely situated lochan, and a range of steep crags which sweep down from the summit of Allival. As we picked our way through the boulders en route for camp, a red flush came over the mists and portended the broken weather which was to keep us camp-bound for the next two days.

On the morning of the last day the sunbeams were filtering through the trees and dancing on the canvas. Fortified by an egg and a slice of bread, the last of our rations, I left the sleeping camp in the wake of Dave and Ben. In six and a half hours I hoped to cover the more distant Trallval-Sgurr nan Gilleann group and return in time for the fishing boat.

The rain-beaded grass, the lochan and the tumbling burns of Coire Ghrunnd all sparkled in the early sun, and many herds of deer stampeded up the hillside proving that Dave and Ben were off on some other route. I crossed a col at 1700 feet between Askival and Beinn nan Stuc and contoured along the rough western flank of Askival to Bealach an Oir, which only cost me 250 feet of descent. The bealach, which lies in the very heart of Rhum's mountains, was flooded in sunlight, as were the wild recesses of Glen Dibidil at my feet. But there was no time for contemplation - I have never travelled to a stricter timetable and I started the steep ascent into the mists of Trallval.

The slopes became a wilderness of slabs and broken crag much magnified by the drifting mists, and some intensive route-finding was necessary to force a way up the breaching gullies and chimneys. At last the cairn loomed up, and I took a new bearing to the south. This presented an equally steep descent to the deep notch of Bealach an Fhuarain at 1650 feet. Here, on the narrow crest of the notch, I heard a faint call from the opposite side of Glen Dibidil where Dave and Ben were climbing Askival. Here too I got my most memorable impression of Rhum, a glimpse perhaps of Tir an Og - The Land of Heart's Desire. On the west, the mist lifted like the edge of a curtain to reveal a waste of blue sea with foam-crested breakers creaming over a crescent of golden sand. It was like a dream picture with its frame of sun-suffused vapour. And dream-like, it was whisked away in the next swirl of mist.

I turned now to the high rock rib supporting this side of Ashval and ascended several hundred feet of fine gabbro which narrowed to a very slender arete. This was the most exhilarating part of the day's climbing, and the arete persisted to close on the summit where it merged with the turf ledges below the cairn at 2,552 feet.

Beyond this cairn there are two gentle dips which mark the twin tops of Sgurr nan Gilleann, and for nearly a mile the way lies over a carpet of short turf,

a welcome contrast to the stony wastes of the surrounding slopes. I did no more than glance at the cairn on the highest top of Gillean before starting the consistently steep descent of its Dibidil slopes. This course involved me in much zig-zag traversing to avoid slabs and outcrops. Eventually I came out of the mist and reached the foot of the glen. I would number the view from here as one of the finest in Scotland. The lonely glen is lined with impressive mountains and guarded by high sea cliffs alive with mewing gulls, and on its threshold the empty shell of Dibidil cottage emphasises the air of desolation.

I had an hour in hand when I took to the track for Loch Scresort. On the map this track is five miles long - in actual fact it is six miles - but in practice it takes 2 1/2 hours of very fast tramping to cover its wavy course, which goes as high as 750 feet above the Sound of Rhum. I arrived an hour and a half behind schedule but, as one might expect from enlightened people, the Soay fishermen were stretched out on the sunny grass drinking tea and never for a minute thinking of such daft things as timetables.

We left this delightful island with genuine regret. There was so much we had not seen and even Skye seemed like an anti-climax by comparison. Rhum has a most distinctive atmosphere which is more easy to appreciate than to define. Frequently in our mountain travels we come across landscapes which remind us of other familiar scenes, but in Rhum there is a sense of continual novelty. Possibly the place names and other Norse associations are in part responsible for this sense of uniqueness, for with names like Trallval, Askival, and Papadil, one feels that the odd Gaelic name like Sgurr nan Gillean is a foreign intrusion.

It is amusing to record that the Scottish Tourist Board had originally listed the Isle of Rhum as a tourist attraction. An obvious error but, one hopes, an unwitting prophesy.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.10, Easter 1948

IRELAND (1948)

A first ascent in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks

by JOHNNIE HARVEY

On descending Carrantouhill (3,414 feet) in the Macgillycuddy's Reeks, I got a glimpse of a very large pinnacle which attracted me very much. Inquiring at the local tavern, I discovered that they called it the Hag's Tooth, "an sure, sorr, there isn't nobody at aal been on top av it." "Well," I replied, "I'll be back next year and I'll climb it."

So in the summer of '48, back we went to Killarney, got Paddy's ponies at the Gap of Dunloe and, well loaded with grub, set off into the hills. On the way Paddy, who does a wee bit of mountain guiding, told me of an Englishman whom he once took up Carrantouhill. He had wanted Paddy to lead him up the Tooth. "No, no", Paddy had said, "Yez can go yersel. I'm only a guide. I'll be after watching ye from below."

We left Paddy and the ponies at an old house, and started our trek up the Glen until we found an ideal camp site beside a very beautiful lochan. There was plenty of firewood consisting of old tree stumps and roots lying about in profusion. And there, right above us, stood the Hag's Tooth.

Next morning we set off, scrambling rapidly up the steep hillside till we reached the base of the Tooth. We could have contoured a little and so found a shorter route to its summit, but I wished to climb it direct. The first few pitches were well broken up with plenty of vegetation, but further up the rock improved. We next came to a series of shelves, all of which seemed to be overhung but which always had an escape.

We were now three-quarters of the way up and, on looking back down, I noticed a large party of tourists complete with guide. We gave them a shout and a friendly wave. They answered us and settled down in comfort to spectate. So with an audience to spur us, we set off again in fine style.

Two more pitches fell and we were right below the summit on a ledge with seemingly no escape. To the left it petered out onto an exposed face with small holds, and to the right was a very nasty looking corner. There we were, stuck, with an audience watching our every move.

Taking a deep breath, and making sure I was well belayed, I climbed out to the corner where, glory be, I found a little chimney. I managed up this with a considerable effort and discovered I was on the final slope of rock. My second man came up panting, and in a few more minutes we were on the top of the Hag's Tooth.

What a cheer we got from below, and what a feeling of triumph we experienced! The actual top was small, and there was only a short descent to the other side. In fact the Tooth could be climbed fairly comfortably by this back route.

Later in the day, going down the Glen, I met the guide and the party of tourists. Though he was pleased we had succeeded in climbing the Hag's

Tooth, I think he was a little bit piqued that the highspot of his spiel was now denied him. His vaunted "Inaccessible Peak" had at long last been conquered.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.11, Winter 1948-49

ONE FOR THE BOOK (1949)

An ascent of the Waterpipe Gully on Skye

by JIM ALLISON

The last thing I had in mind on arriving in Glen Brittle was Waterpipe Gully, yet that very night around the fire on the foreshore it was the chief subject of discussion. Andy and Bill both thought it a 'must', despite my reminder of the accident there the previous year. However, with three to one, the third being Ian who had arrived later, I reluctantly gave in and plans were made for the next day.

I will not say the next day dawned, for in truth I had hardly pulled my bag over me when I felt somebody yanking my feet and Andy's voice saying I had better get a move on or we would miss the bus. Then followed the usual last minute rush of breakfast, grub for the hill, ropes, slings, etc; and so, with the remains of breakfast still in our mouths, we were all aboard.

It was a dull, overcast morning when we alighted at the spot where the Mhaim Pass meets the Glen Brittle road, so each kept his own thoughts much to himself as we plodded over the moor towards the hill. As we came in sight of it I was, as always, conscious of my own insignificance in such surroundings. Except for a little mist at the top, the gully stood out invitingly. Possibly every climber who visits Glen Brittle knows the compelling attraction of that terrific gash which splits Sgurr an Fheadain for 1,300 feet.

We roped up in pairs, Andy and Bill taking the lead, Ian and I following, and stepping into the gully were confronted by a small pitch of twenty feet. Before this we had been congratulating ourselves on the previous five weeks of dry weather, but this first pitch was wet - disgustingly so - and the next one was where the 'rot' set in. A hundred foot wall with a profusion of holds, all of which came out, found Andy halfway up, and this itself a feat. But there he stayed for some time until finally, doing the wisest thing, he traversed up and over on to the right-hand wall. I will not detail all the pitches, for there was really only one more I can remember that was worthy of the name; the rest consisted of endless scrambling on very loose rock and scree, until about two-thirds of the way up, when the gully split in two.

Andy and Bill, ahead of us, chose the left fork and were halted almost immediately by a completely rotten stone-chute, so on their advice Ian and I went right. More scrambling, then a twenty feet moss-covered wall with broad ledges, and finally the heartbreaking ascent of a three hundred feet long scree

slope lying at a forty five degree angle brought us to the foot of what, according to the guidebook, was the crux.

When Andy and Bill arrived, we ate some dates, had a smoke, then looked up. The pitch was ninety feet vertical, finishing in a nasty looking bulge. Ian took the lead, and paying out the rope I was able to watch him putting up one of the best leads I have seen. Moving with care and cleaning out what seemed like tons of rock, dirt and moss, he was finally straddled between the wall and the bulge. One more move found him out on the nose in an extremely airy position, treating us to a very admirable flow of 'basic' English. Then in an instant he was up. I followed, finding it very hard climbing all the way, and on stepping on to the bulge I was grateful for the rope in spite of seeing Ian gloat over my panic. I joined him and waited to do the same for Andy, but he came racing up without a pause, confirming my belief that those lads are tops.

A large chockstone easily surmounted by contortions on the left wall, and it was all over but for a long scree slope which gave way to jumbled summit rocks.

I remember thinking, as in silence we threw ourselves down on the grass to regain our breath, that although nothing would persuade me to do it again, the "Waterpipe" had certainly been 'one for the book'.

from **THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.12, Winter 1949-50**

THE COLUMBIA ICEFIELD (1949)

Climbing explorations in the Canadian Rockies

by **JOE HUTTON**

The Columbia Icefield is in Jasper National Park between Banff and Jasper and consists of about 110 square miles of ice including the Saskatchewan, Athabaska and Columbia Glaciers, the first of which drains into the North Saskatchewan River and the last two forming the sources of the Athabaska River. It was near the foot of the Athabaska Glacier that I joined forces with Ed and Paul, two American mountaineers from Tacoma which is not far from Seattle and Mount Rainier.

On 5th July 1949 we climbed up the glacier, which is about six miles long, and made a ski ascent of Snow Dome (11,340 feet), an easy mountain but an important one as it is the hydrographic apex of a tri-oceanic watershed. On the descent, as there were hidden crevasses to be watched near the head of the glacier, we skied roped together, my first experience of this. The method adopted is to traverse the slope at an angle, each at a different level and to make a turn, usually a slow one like a stem-christiana, on a signal from the lowest person on the rope. This ensures that only one person is likely to break through into a crevasse.

The following day we started to back-pack a four-day camp onto the icefield. We had not long started up the glacier when a thunderstorm which had been threatening broke on us. All we could do was to shelter under a cape until the first fury of the storm had passed, and then we headed for an old hut which was perched on a ridge of Mount Athabaska, reaching it as the storm broke out again. We spent that night and the following day storm-bound and, during lulls, made such repairs to the hut as we could. There were signs that the hut had been used at times by our mountain troops during their wartime training activities hereabouts.

An early start (6am) on the morning of 8th July saw us make camp on the level icefield below Snow Dome at about 9am. Leaving camp we proceeded, roped, across the icefield to Mount Columbia (12,294 feet), one of the four highest peaks in the Canadian Rockies. This took us a considerable time as our camp was probably eight miles from the base of the mountain. After lunch there, we started our attempt on the mountain and chose the East Face. As we ascended this on ski, snow conditions became steadily worse until the situation was positively dangerous and we felt that the slope would avalanche at any moment. Deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, we removed our skis gingerly and descended on foot until we reached a safer position, whereupon we put the skis on again and traversed across the South East Face of the mountain above a bergschrund which stretched almost all the way across the face.

We reached the South Ridge (partly rock) and, removing skis again, started to climb snow slopes to the rock ridge, until a steep rock buttress forced us to the snow face again and this we found to be in as dangerous a condition as the East Face. I had led the rope on the ridge until now, but I was finding it so difficult in my ski boots to tackle the rotten rock that had to be climbed in order to gain access to the rock ridge proper, that I relinquished the lead to Ed who was wearing nailed boots. After some 150 feet of Severe rock climbing with no belays, we found ourselves strung out with Ed precariously hanging to the rock face, myself jammed in a little niche and Paul on a steep snow slope, the rope taught between us and still no belay! I could not move up the difficult rock without endangering the others, and in any case I would have had to bring up Paul, which was virtuously impossible.

All that could be done now was for Ed to cast off his end of the rope and climb unroped to the crest of the ridge, from where he descended the snow. I had also to descend from my perch, and when all three of us were together again we decided to give up our attempt, as it was now about 5.30pm and we had yet to return to camp.

This proved to be a bit of a nightmare for me, as I was still out of condition and the snow had acquired a crust which made any kind of turn on the skis impossible without breaking through the crust and taking a very nasty fall. However, we made it back in about three hours and, after a good

meal, I slept soundly, not withstanding the inadequacy of my old sleeping bag for altitude of over 7,000 feet. This bag of mine has lost still more of its feathers since leaving Scotland!

The following day North Twin (12,085 feet), another of the four highest in the Canadian Rockies, was our objective, successfully. This proved, as with Snow Dome, a straightforward ski ascent by the South-East slopes, but the same crusty snow conditions were encountered on the way back. As this mountain was the same distance from camp as Mount Columbia, it was another long day.

Next morning we broke up camp and skied about four miles over the icefield to the head of the Saskatchewan Glacier, where Mount Athabaska on one side and Mount Castleguard on the other both stand guard. Still on skis, we climbed up the east shoulder of Mount Castleguard (10,026 feet), contouring south in order to gain height by the least effort. We reached within 400 feet of the summit when suddenly there was a sharp crack and about 20 or 30 feet above us the snow split and the slope beneath us began to slide. Paul, who was leading, skied forward and out of the line of the slide, but Ed and I who were in direct line turned our skis downhill in order to ride out the slide. I had rope twined around my skis for climbing purposes, as I had no skins, but despite this the slope was steep enough to enable me to schuss downhill. The slide, however, stopped after some 40 feet, and although we explored another route this was considered by us to be as likely to slide as the original. Reluctantly we returned to the head of the glacier and, saying goodbye to four of the greatest days that I've been privileged to spend amongst the high mountains, we skied as far down it as we could until bare ice forced us to complete the descent on foot.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.12, Winter 1949-50

WITH THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA (1952)

More explorations in the Canadian Rockies

by JOE HUTTON

Last summer, from July 18th to August 6th, the 44th Annual Camp of the Alpine Club of Canada was held in the Freshfield group of mountains in Banff National Park, and I attended the last two weeks of it.

When I drove into the base camp, situated about a quarter of a mile off the Banff to Jasper highway near the junction of the Howse, Mystaya and North Saskatchewan Rivers, the weather was most depressing. Although now the latter part of July, it was quite cold and the surrounding mountains could not be seen for a fine misty rain, reminiscent of Glen Coe at its best - or worst!

On the following morning, after a real camp breakfast of hotcakes and syrup, bacon and eggs, a party of five of us set off on the 21-mile trail through the tall timber to the main camp. Most of our gear was left for the pack horses to bring in, and we carried only food and spare clothing.

We crossed the Mystaya by means of a couple of large logs which had been felled across the river. As the water thundered past a foot or so beneath my feet, carrying fairly large boulders with its force, I was comforted by the feel of the handrail which had been added thoughtfully. Blaze marks on the trees led us to a well-marked trail along the east bank of the Howse River. This was followed for a considerable way until the Freshfield Brook was reached and a way found over the wide expanse of gravel flats through which it wanders. The trail was sometimes well-defined underfoot, but at other times was followed only by blaze marks on trees.

We found the main camp on the edge of the timber separating the flats we had crossed from the tongue of the Freshfield Glacier, which was reached by an hour's walk through the wood. The camp was a fairly large affair, with bell tents for sleeping, marquees for eating, and an assortment of cottage type tents for drying and other purposes. Four persons slept in a bell tent and brought to my mind the four-in-a-bivouac camping weekends with the Lomonds in the Scottish mountains. Breakfast was at 7am and lunches were made ready for those who were setting out on a climb from main camp or going up the glacier to high camp. Notice of climbs was posted up the previous day and persons wishing to participate in any climb wrote down their names. On the day following my arrival I went for an exploratory walk up the glacier to the high camp, although it was a very wet morning. The main tongue of the glacier was an easy walk at a gentle angle, and all crevasses were apparent as the snow had melted from that lower part. Leaving the glacier, a steep rock cliff of about 500 feet had to be climbed to reach the high camp perched on beautiful alpine meadows on the slopes of Mount Niverville (9,720 feet). Unfortunately there were no views to be had that day, as the grey blanket of mist and rain still

enshrouded us.

When I arrived back at main camp that night my ankles were very painful, and I found them to be raw and bleeding. This was caused by my borrowed climbing boots being a couple of sizes too large for me, and I was to be plagued with this trouble from then on although I wore three pairs of socks. Subsequently, with the unwelcome aid of the weather, I was confined to camp for the ensuing part of my first week, taking part in only minor excursions.

However, on my second week, the last of the camp, the weather improved and I was more active, climbing Mount David (8,986 feet) and making two ascents of Mount Niverville. On another occasion David Wessel and I made the first ascent of a minor peak, Petri, which presented no real difficulty. But the finest day I had was perhaps when I went out with Len Chatwin to take some scenes for a film he was making for the National Film Board of Canada. We left camp at 8am one morning and did not return until 1am the following morning. The shots he took were among the wonderful ice scenery of the seracs of the ice-fall high on the slopes of Mount Pilkington (9,830 feet), and included a rescue from a crevasse in which I took the prominent part. This thrilling action and superb dramatic portrayal on my part might yet be seen by Lomonds in a picture called "Cliff-hangers" which has already been seen by a large Canadian public!

First ascents made by other climbing parties on this trip were Mount Helmer (10,045 feet) and Mount Whiteaves (10,300 feet) and I suspect there would have been others had we been blessed with better weather conditions.

I had a grand time at the camp, and I made many friends and met many well-known climbers, both Canadian and American. When I left the base camp for the last time, it was in good climbing company, bound for yet another part of the vastness of the Canadian Rockies.

**from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.13,
Spring 1952**

ZINAL ROTHORN (1956)

An Alpine route

by ROBBIE HUTCHIESON

Having climbed on this trip the Plattenhorner, and the Riffelhorn, we set off for the Rothorn Hut on Thursday, 14th July.

The way from Zermatt lies up the Trift Gorge by the track on the left bank of the stream. Making excellent progress we climbed the steep part then entered the fairly level stretch as the sun gained height. Walking steadily, yet still having time to look at the wonderful scenery, we were impressed by the steepness of the mountain slopes on either side.

After passing the Trift Hotel, the route goes steeply uphill on the crest of a glacier moraine. The Rothorn Hut is perched above this below the South-East Ridge of the Zinal Rothorn. This ridge is a spur which abuts onto the East Ridge. We reached the Hut just before the weather broke, and parties arriving later were soaked.

On Friday, starting at 6am because of the weather, we climbed the Wellenkuppe (12,850 feet). This peak is just right for limbering up on. It has steep rocks and snow, and this year had plenty of ice.

At 4am on Saturday Robert Jnr and I set off for the Zinal Rothorn, making for the crest of the South-East Spur. Climbing quickly we soon gained the crest. The ridge was a glorious one to tread. There was plenty of snow and our crampons gave us confidence, for the crest is narrow and the exposure great.

The East Ridge joined ours and we crossed its South Face into an ice-filled couloir. This couloir is one of the difficult stages of the route, very steep and exposed. After crossing that we made our way up the easy rocks to the Gabel. The Gabel is a gap in the ridge between a gendarme on the Rothorn Grat and the main summit. At the Gabel we were joined by a Swiss climber whom I had offered our rope lower down on the route. He knew the mountain, and now led the route to the summit. Leaving the Gabel, the route rounds the Biner Platte. As there was much ice here it was technically difficult getting off this slab. From here the route goes straight up to the crest of the ridge, steep and quite exposed.

A little way along the ridge we reached the Gendarme, which is the most sensational part of the climb. I had heard much of the giddy traverse around this, and now we would have the experience. The Gendarme is traversed on the east side and the holds are good. There is a bulge which makes it imperative for the climber to look down to see where to place your feet. Looking between your legs you can see the roofs of Zermatt 8,000 feet below. It is really quite easy and we enjoyed it immensely. The way from here is now obvious. A few more rocks remained to negotiate, and at last we stood on the summit at 13,850 feet.

Looking round from the summit the peaks can be seen which I had read about in **"Peaks, Passes and Glaciers"**. What a wonderful time those pioneers

had. There were no huts, and there were routes to make and virgin peaks to win. To the north lie the Schalihorn and Weisshorn. East we have the Mischabel group - the Nadelhorn, Lenzspitze, Dom and Taschhorn. Then the Alphubel, Allalinhorn, Rimpfischhorn, and Strahlhorn. South we see the Monte Rosa, Lyskamm, Castor and Pollux, and the Breithorn. Then the Matterhorn, Dente d'Herens and Dent Blanche are seen. These are the principal peaks, but nearer we have the Wellenkuppe, Ober Gabelhorn and Trifthorn. Looking further afield beyond the Pigne D'Arolla we see the Grand Combin and Mont Blanc. And the Grand Paradiso can also be seen above the clouds.

After eating some chocolate we set off down the rocks and round the Gendarme. Then down the steep slope to the Biner Platte and back to the Gabel. Descending the rocks by the side of the Couloir we had a bit of a fright. A climber dislodged a large boulder which thundered down into the abyss. We expected some of the other climbers to be struck. Although there were a few parties in the line of fire no one was hurt. We were just above the climber who dislodged the stone and the slope was so steep we did not see what took place below. All we heard was the climbers shouting and the noise of crashing rock.

Crossing the Couloir was now a little dangerous. The ice above was breaking away and whizzing down now and then. Underfoot the ice was less reliable, and great care had to be taken to avoid a sudden slip. We crossed the Couloir one at a time. The route now went round some rock which one can hold on to, then slants up to join the crest of the ridge once more.

We scampered along now on snow which was becoming too soft. Reaching the place where we leave the ridge we sat and drank some cold tea, flavoured with lemon, given to us by our Swiss friend. It had been perfect weather and we were all very happy, but though it was lovely up on the ridge we had to stir ourselves. Our Swiss companion suggested unroping. We agreed, and I tied up the rope as Robert Jnr and the Swiss climber raced down the snow slopes.

Many times I had stopped to take photographs during the day, which made us last off the peak. When the rope was duly fastened and slung round my shoulder and I got under way, the other two were well down. I slithered after them as fast as I could and jumped the bergschrund. Then an occasional glissade brought me to the last run down to the Hut.

We had a meal and a rest, and then the 5,000 feet descent to Zermatt. Reaching Zermatt we went into the Walliserkanne and had another good meal. We then walked leisurely through the streets and up the 200 feet to our tent at Winkelmatten.

**from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.14,
Summer 1956**

The following three articles, though separated by some forty years and the inevitable changes in mountaineering over that time, are inextricably linked.

The first article, by Peter McGeoch, appeared in the LMC Journal in 1950. The issues which McGeoch mentions are familiar today in the 1990s and just as relevant, in the context of the ever increasing popularity of outdoor recreation and the growing pressures which the mountain environment has to bear. In compiling this Journal it seemed McGeoch's article should therefore be included. And we asked Bob Reid and Kevin Howett of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to respond to McGeoch's theme and bring it up to date by describing some of the issues currently involving the MCofS. The Lomond Club has been affiliated to the MCofS since the early 1970's, so it is fitting to have these articles included here.

Peter McGeoch probably reflected the feelings of most climbers in his time who had grown up to enjoy the freedom of the hills in the 1930s and 40s. Bob Reid in his article suggests nothing much has changed, and reflects on how the MCofS can help defend today's climbers' interests. And Kevin Howett describes some current issues which his work for the MCofS has involved him in, related to his personal experiences and wishes as an active climber. [Editor]

THE BUREAUCRAT AND THE MOUNTAINEER (1950)

Access issues, etc, in 1950 by PETER MCGEOCH

There is a gulf between the bureaucrat and the mountaineer which regulation and organisation only increases. The mountaineer, having had the desire to seek, and having found in the mountains the freedom which he finds necessary to balance his life, is being pursued by the bureaucrat with the organisation and regulation from which he had hoped to escape. Some are well-intentioned amateurs, some are professionals who for wages would be prepared to regulate anything from the love life of the whelk to the number of skiers per acre on Cairngorm at Easter. The latter gentry would seem the more dangerous: they do not appear to have any idea what actuates the mountaineer. They have the power of government behind them and they seem to regard the mountaineer as a foreign body in their plans, who must be regulated, isolated, and rendered harmless. These people work in London and Edinburgh and the free winds of the hills never blow in their offices.

The Forestry Commission can be taken as an example of a body doing useful work with a one-track mind. The mountaineer did not object when they planted trees round the foot of mountains and obstructed access. The rub came when the Commission acquired vast tracts of mountain country on which they could only plant up to about 800 feet. To help justify the taxpayers' grant they declared these areas as National Forest Parks for the use of the people. They then set about organising these areas of hitherto free movement into

developed and regulated areas with a set of rules as long as one's arm. There are to be definite walking paths, specified camping fields (with facilities) at a shilling per night, no camp fires, and no casual camping, even on 4,000 feet high mountains. The Forest Parks do not exist for the convenience of the user, but the user to justify the Forest Parks.

The National Parks Committee being set up by Act of Parliament, is another such body. Vast areas of the best climbing territory are to be taken over and developed. Development means walkers' paths, hotels, restaurants, tea rooms, recreation facilities, and defined camp sites (also with facilities). The climber will require permission to camp, probably at a shilling per night. The mountaineer was better off under the landlords!

The Scottish Tourist Board is a particularly pernicious organisation. It is their self-elected duty to see that as many people as possible are brought to the National and Forest Parks - tourists!

The Central Council of Physical Recreation is a government-subsidised parasite on climbing. It is an organisation of well-paid administrators who are exploiting the love of young people for the mountains and of the anxiety of the mountaineers to teach their craft as unpaid instructors.

The Hydro Electricity Board has, so far, not affected the mountaineer, and no doubt the mess they are making will be cleared up!

Among the good-intentioned could be listed the British Mountaineering Council and the Youth Hostels Association. The British Mountaineering Council started off after the war with the grandiose scheme of organising and protecting all British mountaineers. So far they have spent the last four years talking and spending all the subscription monies on endless and verbose circulars. They have accomplished nothing. The Youth Hostels Association has degenerated from the ideal of the early 1930s into an organisation intent on quantity not quality, and from substitute howffs to lodging houses, and from tenth-rate boarding houses to Manor Houses and Castles.

There is no doubt that many, if not all, of these organisations are good intentioned, but there is also no doubt that if they will not leave the mountaineer to his mountains, then they should take heed of his requirements and make use of his expert knowledge and guidance.

from THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL No.12, Winter 1949-50

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORK OF THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

by its current President, BOB REID

1950 and 1990, two generations since Peter McGeoch wrote his piece and yet the same issues loom up for the mountaineer to deal with. The French have a saying, '**Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose**'. I am inclined to echo that and support the thesis that we have not progressed at all, and that the only real change has been one of scale: there are more mountaineers; there are more bureaucrats; there are even more Munros, and there are certainly more problems.

A quotation I am fond of using in representing mountaineers comes from Bill Murray's **Undiscovered Scotland**, published a year after the LMC Journal No.12. He states, "**Here is a field of free action in which nothing is organised, or made safe or easy or uniform by regulation; a kingdom where no laws run and no useful ends fetter the heart.**"

This seems as relevant today as it was then, and it always puts me in mind of a friend who gently scoffs at the work of the MCofS and its sister organisation, the BMC. He is a true man of the hills, a real traveller, who completed his Munros in spite of handicap, utilising only public transport or bicycle (well before the mountain variety was invented). Of access problems he has never complained, preferring to rely on his own self sufficient philosophy that the hills cannot be owned, or fenced or tamed. "They are no man's, they are everyman's and if you tell me I can't go there, I'll cycle on a bit and find another way up, and what's more you shall not notice me for I'll leave no trace."

In a sense my friend has no need of the MCofS, though he often uses the services that the organisation provides. I suspect that there are thousands of other mountaineers out there, whether in clubs or not, who would find my friend a kindred spirit and hold similar views about bureaucrats whether they wear suits made of serge or Helly Hansen. What is more, for most hillgoers that philosophy of self sufficiency becomes part of their motivation, part of the very *raison d'être* for mountaineering. This relates neatly back to Bill Murray's quotation about the nature of mountaineering. It encapsulates beautifully an ethos that I will pugnaciously defend as long as I believe it to be right and just.

And there's the rub. Our claim to that philosophy only holds good as long as it doesn't become selfish sufficiency. There are so many more claims being made upon our hills today, some of which are just, and some of which are worse than selfish (blanket sitka plantation forestry, super quarries, most deer forest management with its attendant bulldozing of tracks). Mountaineering cannot be seen to be emerging as just another of these claimants who simply looks after its own narrowly perceived interests. It doesn't take much analysis to conclude that the very best way

to avoid these criticisms is for each of us to behave responsibly, while collectively organising ourselves to put across our 'unselfish' message.

This is exactly what happened in the late sixties (perhaps too long after Peter McGeoch's words) as a few individuals began to realise that without a representative organisation, the voice of mountaineering in Scotland would be weakened. Bill McKenzie, helped by Sandy Cousins, Bill Myles and Donald Bennet, launched the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (with not a little national pride involved) in 1970. Since then the helm of the MCofS has passed to Bill Murray, Bob Grieve, Alec Small, Robin Campbell, Graham Little and finally myself, ably assisted by stout secretaries, keen treasurers and now by a National Officer. 'Committee people' you might call us, or 'bureaucrats', should you wish to be more damning.

Remember, though, that collectively these climbers, for that is really what they are, have put in many thousands of hours of their own time to keep the organisation, your organisation, evolving in the right direction and presenting the right message. That message, if I can borrow the words of one of my predecessors, Robin Campbell, is that "access is important, but the mountaineers are more so." Furthermore these bureaucrats should be forgiven if at times the inevitable happens and their message becomes mixed up with aims which seem more about perpetuating the organisation they serve. Which is where you, the 'climbing punter', come in. Keeping the Mountaineering Council of Scotland on the rails, evolving and developing to better serve the membership (and the mountains), of necessity must involve you, the climbing public. So get involved, even if it only means joining as an individual member as well as joining your club...every little helps.

The Council has evolved, I believe, in fits and starts. We are presently on a plateau and to continue to improve our effectiveness and performance a whole sea change is now required. The first steps along that route were taken three years ago when the Council employed its first part time official. This has given a taste of the potential impact that could be achieved (see Kevin Howett's article which follows this one), and it is my firmly held view that climbers in Scotland today should expect a service which is professionally organised, with a director, a national officer (who can preferably drag ageing presidents up E4s at the very least) and a secretary. Instead of drawing rooms and bedsits, a real office with an open door to you the membership is long overdue. Without these developments I fear that we could really be left in a wilderness of our own making.

Bob Reid, November 1992

WHAT HAVE THE VIKINGS EVER DONE FOR US?

by KEVIN HOWETT, National Officer for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland

On the school bus, to and from the small redundant pit village that was my home, the Cheviot Hills tantalisingly shimmered beyond the rolling wide open space that is Northumberland. It was little wonder then, after a teeny-bopper's introduction to walking those same hills, peering down from the summit of Windy Gyle into the unknown lands of Scotland, that I would feel the urge to walk over the edge. After all, this was the age of tartan and the Bay City Rollers.

To this blindly ignorant adolescent Scotland was a wilderness untouched by man and empty except for the occasional sporan. Here germinated the obsession to explore: solitary glens and pathless Munros; friendly mountain inhabitants (animal, human and vegetable). I was under the impression that no-one had been interested in the place since the Vikings left.

But things, and people, change.

Adolescent selfish enthusiasm gave way to poverty when climbing became an obsession for me, when the full delights of enforced winter bivis, with their cold groping spindrift, no longer seemed as sexy as the current environmental concern. It was time to get a job.

As I noticed for the first time the signs proclaiming the hills as private domains for their owners to short-sightedly scar with forestry and bull-dozed tracks, and a day out with Harry on a Corbett would not guarantee peace and contentment, I began to question the whys and wherefores; and as the National Officer for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, I began to find out who's who in the world of access and conservation espionage.

I have had to question a few of my basic premises. For instance, when we are young, when we are wolves, we assume that the freedom to walk and climb comes as an automatic right. That's what wolves do. Like the air we breathe and the gravity that dispatches us should we lose our grip, we give it no second thought. Well, this is a myth, I have to tell you, for our ability to roam over and enjoy beautiful landscapes comes with the perseverance and dedication of people who care. But for them, Munro baggers and anorexic rock weirdos would be as extinct in Scotland as the wolf that was shot down through ignorance and distrust in the sixteenth century.

Witness the following recent episodes over the last year or so which the MCofS has had to deal with.

There were the signs erected at the Letterewe Estate which touched a raw nerve. They implied that walkers and wild campers are a threat to wildlife conservation and so required strict controlling. As Scottish Natural Heritage's Dick Balharry explained to me at Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve, who are we conserving for? We are part of the conservation process and access cannot be denied to us if we are to educate people how best to

appreciate it. The MCofS are now talking with the Letterewe Estate on good terms, and what may come out of it - an "accord" between wild land management and recreation - could influence wider thinking. Indeed it already seems to have contributed to a closer understanding with the Scottish Landowners Federation.

We made the strongest comments possible on draft changes to Red Deer legislation: changes regarding culling times and access control, which some landowners see as vital in their deer management but who would impose on you and I unacceptable restrictions. We await the outcome.

Ratho Quarry looked doomed when Wimpey Asphalt proposed expansion, but our official objection and those of regular climbers there, particularly from Edinburgh, has saved it for now.

The McLeod Estate on Skye have had to rethink their plans to build a corrugated iron clad visitor centre in Glen Brittle due to our campaign.

We fought against the proposals to mine barytes minerals on the Corbett hill of Farragon on the fringes of the Loch Rannoch National Scenic Area, and won.

We are now joining forces with local residents and other conservation groups to stop the superquarry idea dead in its tracks, especially that recently proposed near Glen Coe.

The list is seemingly endless and at times I get demoralised at what little value some people appear to have for our greatest asset, the diversity of our natural heritage and the freedom to enjoy it. As I grow older I shall certainly wish to continue walking and climbing as hard as I can, to climb that new route on that magnificent as yet undiscovered sea cliff, or to watch the fulmars, the perigrines and the otters. However, I realise that I can no longer take my freedom for granted. I am prepared to raise my voice in discussion, or in anger when necessary, to make sure I will be free to find that cliff in the first place.

Kevin Howett, November 1992

THE BALLAD OF CHILDE CHRISTIE (1976)

Mr Christie celebrates his birthday in Langdale

by IAN SPRING

Childe Christie's gane a-wandering, an' he's heading for the south,
Stappin' at a howff or twa tae satisfy his drowth.

He's reached that English valley whaur the tourists gang in hordes,
An' a' the shops in Langdale are pitting up their boards.

Noo the glaikit camp-site warden wi' his great big wally dug,
Is feart that Scottish climbers will tak' him for a mug:

"Nae pissin' on the trees, nae swearin', an' nae noise,"

He held up his hands in horror when he met the Glesca boys.

There's a pub in the valley, it's called the Dungeon Ghyll,
Where the English drink their bitter and the Scottish drink their fill:

Our hero's filled his belly wi' the best o' English beer,

They ca it 'Auld Peculiar', but he's no feeling queer.

Noo George was sitting pretty when the locals gethered a',

Carving his initials on the lavatory wa' -

They said, "Look here, old fellow, this jolly well must stop!

That kind of thing just isn't done in this 'ere English shop."

But our hero didnae turn a hair - though he saw them turning puce,

And he crouselly stood up to them like the Wallace or the Bruce.

As he said, "Ah come frae Govan, an' I'm rarin' fur a fight,"

Their knees began tae tremble an' their faces turned tae white.

Noo twenty English hard men hae flown afore his frown,

Twenty he's kicked in the ba's, an' twenty he's knocked down,

He's put the heid in twenty an' left them on the flair,

But alas for puir Childe Christie, there were twenty-seven mair.

So George he met a nasty end agin' the English foe,

An' we're scattering his ashes on the rude soil of Glen Coe;

But we've got a fitting monument tae mark his galant fa',

Noo it says 'Old Dungeon Ghyll' ten foot up the Rannoch Wa'.

Ian Spring, 1976

Rock Climbing For Beginners

PART ONE - A BRIEF HISTORY.

'In the Beginning there was no Rock-Climbing, only Mountains & Rocks...



Some Mountains & Rocks.

People feared Mountains and generally left them alone. Artists regarded them as scenic backdrops for highland cattle & peasants...



Scenic Background.

Peasants

Highland Cow

At first people were content to climb Mountains by the easiest route, but soon looked for harder ways. Rock Climbing was born when Alpine climbers sought practice in Britain & started enjoying it for its own sake...

Rock climbing in those days was more dangerous than now since equipment & technique was less well thought out...



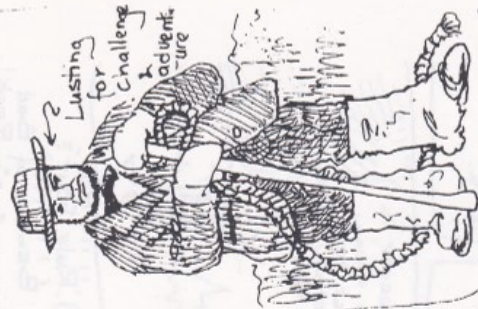
A famous Alpine wipe-out. (After Gustave Dore).

Modern Rock Climbing evolved through other peoples mistakes learning by



him... Maybe Nylon Ropes, Pitons, Alloy Karabiners & Sophisticated Belay Techniques would be a better scene...

But for some men's lust for challenge & adventure this was NOT ENOUGH...



Lusting for challenge & adventure

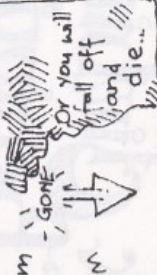
AND SO - PART TWO - MODERN ROCK CLIMBING.

This man is a rock climber.
He wants to climb these rocks.
What must he do to achieve his goal?

Climbs are graded according to how difficult they are. This quality is either expressed as a number (1-7) or in words (Easy) to XS (Extremely Silly). Climbers usually work their way up through the grades, adding to their gear gradually until fear, marriage, serious injury or death halts their progress...

So, in order to survive, climbers have several **GOLDEN RULES**, which must never be broken...

Rule One
Never plan above your abilities...



First he must get the right equipment ("GEAR"), or know someone who already has it...



Anyway, the climber in the first box of this lesson wants to boldly go where no man has gone before, so he won't know how hard it is until he gets up there, by which time it may be too late...

However, he is brave & doesn't care, and thinks only of the few feet of rock in front of him, and the fame when he succeeds...

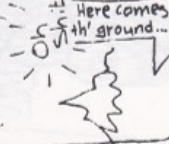
Sensible

Then he must buy the guidebook for the area...
£2.96



This is needed in order to choose which way to take & what grade it is.

However, it is always best to tactfully retreat if necessary...



Rule Three - PLAN AHEAD



Rule Two - Always maintain Three Points of Contact which ensures stability...



Rule Four



Rule Five-

And bad ropes



Rule Six-

Never drop rocks there may be people below...



Rule Seven.

Always pay your campsite fees. The warden is usually fees! also in the Mountain Rescue team...



Rule Eight

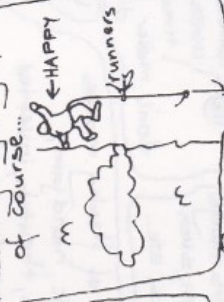
Use your human inventiveness to make things as safe as possible. This usually involves

- (a) Not going, or
- (b) Using runners.

Runners are ingenious

The theory is that if you run your rope through several fixed points on the way up (using wedges, nuts & knobs) you will only fall twice the distance above the highest one...

Assuming they stay in, of course...



← SHEER TERROR



Now, a good runner can be placed almost anywhere if you have a drill & a few bolts

but this is UNETHICAL. The view being that if you are that keen to stay alive you are obviously a wimp & ought to stay in bed...

GOOD ETHICS

- ① Never put in runners with a hammer, unless totally convinced of imminent doom. Hammers scar the rock, make bad noise, and weaken the Soul...

- ④ Never put other people off. Even if it is good fun, it's in very bad taste...

- ③ At all costs - don't use CHALK. Chalk stops your hands from sweating & hence makes climbing easier. Because of this it is UNETHICAL unless the temperature is over 140° in the shade. Chalk messes up the rock, gets up other people's noses, and makes you go blind...

- ② Allow faster parties to pass you.



- ⑤ Never steal other people's cheese & tomato sandwiches. It's not fair...



⑥ Of course the most unethical thing of all is artificial aids. This means that instead of using only the rock holds to make progress you also hold onto various things you brought with you, such as pitons, nuts, bolts, etc...

People really hate aids. Especially when someone else ~~uses~~ them. Although very unethical in they are collected feverishly and almost everyone uses them some times. Ethics don't matter in times of dire need...

... Using all manner of flashy moves such as the layback, hand jam, pinch grip, two-step, thrutch, inverted half-nelson, the poke, climax, the wriggle, the funky chicken, and the desperate leap...

In cases like this the thing to do is ABSEIL, which involves sliding down the rope in a controlled manner. The rope can either be wrapped around the body (can be painful) or threaded through a "device" designed specially for the purpose.

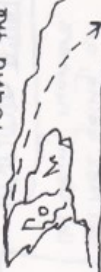


TECHNIQUES
The most important thing about climbing is **STYLE**. Even if you are scared shitless you must **LOOK GOOD**. Never use your knees. (I don't know why, just never use them) Move slowly & with grace...



Used in rapid succession this makes a spectacle quite unparalleled in nature. Phew! ...until you Grunt realize you can't get back down... Wow! Look at him go!!!

Getting back down ~ Most mountains are thoughtfully designed and have an easy way down round the back



The most important thing about abseiling (apart from not letting go of the rope) is to make sure that the rope is secured properly at the top... POW! This is an insecure system



But enough of such matters!
Assuming you have managed to get up (and down) safely, you can now indulge in the best part of all - Talking about it. In order to do this you must have a good knowledge of **TERMINOLOGY**.

The first thing you must know is the NAME of the climb you did. This information is available in your GUIDEBOOK. Since climbs are given names so that you can talk about them, they are usually given EXCITING NAMES.

Also you must be able to explain how you FELT at the time, usually over or under - exaggerating for full effect...
Either ~ "Christ! It's the most terrifying route on earth, I was gripped blind, totally gripped out of my crust, I was like a gibbering wreck after the 14th crux..."

Both these are descriptions of the same route ~ "The Blue Cucumbers Mating Season" at Malham. All depends who's listening...

Or ~ "Well, didn't really find it much bother myself, the holds are small but so long as you keep cool it's OK, not many runners, mind..."

the exploding Strawberry (HVS)

Jack The Ripper Exposes Himself with Feelin' (XS)

UPPER DEATH CRAG, BORROWDALE

Requigitation Fever (Diff)

Bummer in Crimson (HXS)

Blind Grope(s)

Once you learn what climb you did you have to be able to Explain How you Did It (see Techniques). (If necessary, illustrate with the appropriate gestures...)



CREDIBILITY

- (1) Always find out if the bloke you're talking to has done the route before you start improvising
- (2) Always wear your P.A.s to the pub
- (3) Never wear your whillars Harness or crampons to the pub.
- (4) Duvets are out of fashion from May to October.
- (5) Never ever talk about what you're going to do tomorrow - you may have to live up to it.

Talking about climbing has in some people totally replaced climbing itself. The trouble with this is that you may run out of subject matter. But not to worry! One friend of mine, a master of the art when running out of his own exploits goes on to tell of those of everyone else complete with relevant gestures, sound effects, facial expressions, etc, etc, ...

And Finally

"But why do they do it?"

Some climbers do it because the new is nice and they meet lots of wonderful people. Others like the challenge & like to escape from mundane existences in cities and do GREAT THINGS and also

TREADING MATTER.

Time was when young, keen climbers weaned themselves on such tomes as "The White Spider", "The Hard Years", "Man of Everest", "Mountaineering in Scotland", and "Conquistadores of the Useless". Nowadays this is "Boring Old Fark" stuff. These days, required reading consists of "Mayfair", "Crag", and "Mountain". The latter tell you what the latest routes are,

and not only that, but an adrenaline rush is something else. Sometimes things get bad & someone really hurts himself & all his friends tread more carefully but everyone else carries on regardless and isn't life fun? Go climb a rock and make yrself happy for a day and then ask WHY. (END).

← put your own reasons here.

& all three are packed full of juicy photographs to set the imagination going and let you know what plans to drop into conversation... (Pete Livesey, Ron Fawcett, Willy Todd, Steve Bancroft, Fiona Richmond and Ken Johnstone.)

--- CUT OUT AND SEND ---

Dear Dougie, I really enjoyed your cartoon and I think you must be a really wonderful guy. I know how much you loathe charity, but please accept this cash/cheque/postal order/offer of my body. *Thanks again

(signed) ---

send to - D. Benn, 64 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3SA.

* Delete where applicable.

ON BEN NEVIS (1979)

by DOUGLAS BENN

I've never seen a bigger hill,
I don't suppose I ever will,
But Everest is bigger still,
The very thought would make you ill.

Douglas Benn, 1980

(from SCOTROCK, by Lomond Climbing Group, 1980)

EXTRACTS FROM THE CLUB LOG BOOKS 1975-1993

Selected and edited by RICHARD A. NAPIER

From January 1975 up to the present the Club has kept both a Meets Log Book and a Hut Log Book for members to record their climbing activities, which has had occasional contributions from guest parties.

The period from 1975 to 1979 in particular was an extremely active one for a core of hard climbers in the Club who were busy at that time developing several new outcrops in the Glasgow area as well as the big Glen Coe cliffs, with a considerable number of first ascents (see History article). Climbing standards rose in the Club then, and has remained high through the 1980s and 90s, and the Log Books have been well used in that period.

This edited selection of snippets taken from the many comments and anecdotes in these two Log Books of the last 18 years, displays some of the joy of the climbing done during this time, as well as the good humoured camaraderie, banter and repartee amongst members, which is rich in the Log Books.

The fantastic foursome (Ken, Benny, Eddie McW, D. Benn) set off for the **OLD MAN OF PATEY** (in the Orkneys). The two former climbed the route, slowly, while the latter watched, critically. A rather good holiday, punctuated by skuas (various makes) and fulmars (green ghouls).

Then Ken and I did **Gladiator's Groove** - hard, best route on the Nobbler. Did half of **The Pause** with George, not feeling at all well (wonder why?), abseiled down to mock Jacobites on the Reach. End for now, see ya!

Dougie Benn 13 August 1975 Meets Log

Since this book was last handed round, D. Benn and K. Johnstone did rather a lot of things, mainly outcropping until mid-June (**Stonefall Crack**, various festers, followed Benny up **Big Zipper** - on aid). A week's magic weather in the Coe resulted in him (Ken) doing **Carnivore** (4th known ascent of The Villain's

Finish) with John Kerry (the mad Welshman drinks Guinness and never pays).
Hamish McTelfer 16 August 1975 Meets Log

Was going to do Ben More (Isle of Mull), but crashed the bloody car!
Hamish McTelfer 16 August 1975 Meets Log

Friday 22 August:

South Face of the Finnieston Walls - **The Punter's Dilemma (4b)** - there's nae grips!

Betty's Bar - A nice place for a quiet drink.

A Wee Place Just Doon The Road Frae Betty's Bar - A real "man's pub".

Victoria Bar - World famous haunt of folk singers, poets, winos, and of course yours truly!

The Savoy Centre (98p) - A fitting climax to a fine evening's climbing.

George Christie 22 August 1975 Meets Log

Dumbarton Rock 8.9.75 - **Chemin De Fer (VS and A2)**.

An ascent mainly on jammed nuts - 4 pegs only. D. Benn, gripped before he left the ground, did not attempt the route. Gear was left in overnight.*

Ken Johnstone, George Christie 8 September 1975 Meets Log

Dumbarton Rock, 9.9.75 - **Chemin De Fer (VS and A2)**.

An ascent mainly on jammed nuts. D. Benn again didn't participate. Two policemen spectated with amazed interest.

Ken Johnstone 9 September 1975 Meets Log

*This is a damned lie! G.A. Christie and second took so long between them (5 hours and 1 hour respectively) that I was left with the prospect of de-pegging the route in TOTAL DARKNESS. Since this is not my favourite hobby, I declined to follow. Added to that was the fact that Mr Christie was hopping off to attend a concert, so it promised to be a big grip. Please refrain from slander in this log.

Dougie Benn September 1975 Meets Log

The Great Lakes Extravaganza: 12th-19th September 1975

The Gordian Knott (MVS). G.A. Christie and Des (SMC). Scene of many abortions. Not us.

Kipling Groove (HVS). Scene of an epic by yours truly. Newton's Laws work!!! Thank God for ropes and seconds!

George Christie 20 September 1975 Meets Log

The Great Lakes Extravaganza continued:

Man of Straw (XS 5b/c). D. Benn and G.A. Christie.

Sitting in the Stickle Barn Cafe one sunny afternoon, between staring at greasy

meals and the only blonde in Langdale, we chanced to look out of the window. Up on the majestic crags of the White Ghyll was a climber on the route we had been waiting for. We returned to the grease.

"Fancy a go at Man of Straw?" says George.

I nod.

Off we trot, and soon we are setting up beneath the groove. I belay to many, many things and George leads off quickly to the Discotheque Ledge, the best foothold. A brief pause, then the rope shoots upwards (sound effects by George Christie: "GRUNT, CLANK, PUFF PUFF, WHEEZE. If this is what bloody extreme climbing is like I'm giving up here and now!!").

Thank you, Mr Christie. A runner is lobbed in and progress is resumed.

"Right, I'm moving." No movement.

"Are you ready?" he asks.

"Yup!"

"I'm not!" Eventually a fast move and the air turns blue with obscenities.

My go. I have little more to add, apart from there were only 3 handholds (not juggies) in 90 feet.

A good lead and a f ***** good route!

Dougie Benn 20 September 1975 Meets Log

Another Great Lakes Epic! In the idiom of Ken Johnstone, with supporting cast of Dougie Benn, Honda 500, and Vango tent. Left Glasgow at 9am, arrived Langdale 11pm, after running out of petrol, cash, time, and ending up in the pictures in Kendal (**Monty Python & Holy Grail/Death Race 2000**). Next day did **Slip Not** on White Ghyll, a good route for a cold day, which it was. The Central Cafe in Ambleside and the O.D.G. snackhouse both open all day Sunday. After pushing the bike most of the way home, arrived after midnight absolutely knackered and very poor.

Dougie Benn 7 March 1976 Meets Log

'The Flying Boleros' - Arrochar.

Punter's Thingy (S), Wither Wether (S), and Right-Angled Thingy (S).

This was a cold day. We drank tea. I shat myself.

Anon 7 March 1976 Meets Log

Dumbarton Rock.

Attempt upon **Chemin De Fer** aborted at 10m/s2 by Mad McCallum (EBM), along with several friendly rocks. Rocks stopped by Dougie Benn, McCallum stopped by ground. A fine crater. Most then decided that the Cafe Continental was preferable.

Dougie Benn 14 March 1976 Meets Log

Buxton Climbing Conference, 27th-28th March 1976.

After an all night drive we all went to the Conference and saw 'Mort d'Un

Guide' - I was too gripped. Livesey waffled on **Hard Rock**, McNaught-Davis just waffled, Bonington played with himself, and Habeler denied it all. Mr Christie was heard to shout out (to Habeler at question time): "But how many Munros has he done?", but that was lost in the vast expanse of the Buxton Opera House.

Next day Ken did **Valkyrie**, then we all did **Sloth** but nobody got up it (some not for lack of trying, eh Douglas?). EBM got gripped silly and soiled the crag, as well as his pants.

Dougie Benn et al. 28 March 1976 Meets Log

Glen Coe.

Trapeze - Christie's Pointless Variation:

1. Climb 20 ft up 1st Pitch of Trapeze to ledge (piton runner). The crux roof is reached in another 15ft. Climb to the roof and step out right onto a holdless wall (HVS 5c). Before falling off, attempt to place a piton. If successful, tension back to starting position and climb normal crux to belay.
2. Pitch 2 of Trapeze.
3. Pitch 3 of Trapeze
4. At the belay place an abseil sling and make a 150ft abseil (no chalk on descent) to the gully floor.
5. A direct descent is then made to the Kingshouse Hotel for nosh and bevv.

George Christie 3 July 1976 Meets Log

Auchinstarry Quarry, Kilsyth - New Direct Descent Route 30ft.

This route takes a direct line over the overhangs at the broken ground about 25ft left of Green Death*. Start at any convenient loose hold. Slither backwards over uncomfortable broken ground and exit over the overhang at its widest point, landing on all fours (crux) alongside assorted rubbish!

Second declined to follow.

Ken Johnstone 30 October 1976 Meets Log

Second watched from below, much impressed.

Dougie Benn

*Green Death is an unlisted route right of **Fish Rising**, in the Amphitheatre area of the Quarry [Ed].

January. Somewhere in England with the 'Wild Bunch' - 'Cool' Ken Johnstone, The Expansion Bolt Man (EBM), 'Big' Pete Ogden (looking mean and ready for anything) and Dougie Benn (The Bionic Hippy).

Shepherd's Crag: Cold and sunny. We all did **Little Chamonix**. Then Peter and Dougie did **Fisher's Folly**; while Ken took it easy on **Bludgeon** but never got to the top, but waited until it was dark before he slunk away when no-one could see him. Oh yes. And we all made fantastic abseils (Grade IV/V) down the overhang on **Bludgeon**.

Kendal, later that same day: we went to the flicks to see "**One Flew Over The**

Cuckoo's Nest". Great stuff. See it at once.

Next day: Trowbarrow Quarry (where?) (I don't know where it is either). Did **Jean Jeannie** in the cold and wet and all got our digits froze off until we escaped to Morecombe to see "**Sextet**" and "**Clockwork Nympho**". Utter filth. Ken loved it. We had to drag him away from his seat at the end. Then we went to Blackpool and Yates Wine Lodge - a nice place if you're an alkie. Spent a great night at the home of Pete's folks in Lancashire - a boggling place - and EBM prattled on for hours about the legendary 'Bio' men who rename old aid routes and star in Batman films. It was very wet so we went in search of Anglezarke, which is shite. We climbed a Diff and threw stones at the famous Golden Tower but didn't climb it.

Then we went home.

Dougie Benn January 1977 Meets Log

Glen Coe.

George Christie, Dougie Benn, Willie Johnstone, Ken Thomas and Martin Thom.

The weather wasn't very nice, and thaw setting in. We all set off up the Lost Valley, and the latter three went on to climb mountains! (such hardy fellows), but George and I only got as far as the Boulder which we played on before beaming down to the Clachaig for a couple of pints. Then we went to the Rannoch Doss to see Calum Smith and laugh at dirty books until it was time to go home; and more pints at Inverbeg, and mock skiers apres skiing in womble boots and the latest dungarees from Mary Quant. Must sign off now,
Love, Douglas xxxx

Douglas Benn 23 January 1977 Meets Log

A wee poem:

Scab and matter custard
Snot and bogey pie
Dead dog's giblets
Green cat's eye
Spread it on bread
Spread it on thick
Wash it all down
With a cup of cold sick.

George Christie August 1977 Meets Log

Gogarath.

Pete Ogden, Ken Johnstone.

Concrete Chimney - A lovely route amongst gulls and sea.

Gogarath - Another super lovely route amongst gulls and sea and loose rock and high velocity bird shit and lots and lots of chalk.

Pete Ogden March 1977 Meets Log

New definition (from EBM):

Acapulco: to fall and subsequently hit the sea from over 100ft. Not recommended.

Doug McCallum 1978 Meets Log

A song:

We are the Lomond Club
We're all big and strong
When we go up mountains
We stay there all day long.
(Coda & fade) . . .

Love & kisses, Dougie xxx

Dougie Benn July 1978 Meets Log

Dumbarton Rock.

Chemin De Fer (VS and A2). AN EPIC (including visit by police, peel off old peg, frequently running out of gear, and second failing to follow traverse).

N.B. A large collection of nuts on wire are needed for this route (I didn't have them).

John Alcock 3 April 1979 Meets Log

Tower Hill (Craigmuschat Quarry), Greenock.

Ken Johnstone and Willie Todd were ejected from the vicinity in no uncertain terms by a group of aggrieved gendarme.

Ken Johnstone June 1979 Meets Log

Ben Nevis.

South Gully III

I. Sneddon, & Right Rev. K. Roach (cursing and wearing dog collar).

Route completed by candlelight. Descent head-first down No.4 Gully. Path to CIC lit by crampon sparks.

Ian Sneddon 10 March 1980 Meets Log

After 2 years sleep, Mark Worsley went to Wales and drank beer.

Mark Worsley September 1980 Meets Log

Ben Oodlay, 26.12.81

Boxing Day on the hill for the rock gymnasts.

All climbing aborted due to the boys getting avalanched.

George Christie December 1981 Meets Log

Old Man of Hoy, Orkney, 27.9.82

G.A. Christie & EBM.

Unable to complete last 60 feet of route due to Force 9 gale. Ultra epic abseil. Lost 3 ropes. Stranded on Hoy with no drink due to heavy seas. Not a route for persons of a nervous disposition.

George Christie September 1982 Meets Log

"Official" opening of the Club's Onich Hut, 4 September 1982.

30.10.82: LMC Annual Dinner at Creag Dhu Hotel, Onich. Much drinking. Much vomiting.

Meets Log

January 1983:

Coire an ~~Schneehda Sneehtd~~ Snec-thingy, Cairngorms.

Padding.

G.A. Christie, Stu The Doc (on ski) & Dirty Derek.

George Christie 2 January 1983 Meets Log

Update on activities of G. Corbet since July last year.

August 1982: Walked up to Slimy Wall on Buachaille with G. Christie who was intent on doing **Shibboleth**. Fortunately rain started just as we approached the bottom of the route.

September 1982: Went to Grian Alps and climbed a few big hills. Great weather, good food, plenty cheap wine.

October 1982: Nothing.

November 1982: Ditto.

December 1982: Involved in accident in Winter Corrie, Glen Clova.

April 1983: Went to La Chusaz (French Alps) with KJ (and 50 school kids) for a skiing holiday. Very wet (inside and outside). Score = 2 broken legs and 1 interesting holiday.

May 14th-15th 1983: Great Langdale Meet. Very wet weekend.

May 28th-30th 1983: Little Langdale Meet. Even wetter than before (G. Corbet and B. Hickey). Above mentioned pair turned out to be stupid enough to stay on in the Lakes for the rest of the week. Very wet.

June 6th 1983: Dumbarton Rock: KJ took me up **Desperado** - even better than before.

June 18th-19th 1983: CIC Meet, Ben Nevis. Aborted attempt on **Sidewinder (VS)** due to loose rock (and weak nerves). Did **Shadow (VS)** - took quite a long time - fixed ropes, 3 bivvies, 10 pegs, 4 skyhooks, etc, etc.

George Corbet June 1983 Meets Log

CIC Meet, June 18th-19th, 1983. W. Johnstone & B. Hickey.

Left Hand Route (VS) - superb route. Pad across steep snow in PAs somewhat disconcerting. Johnstone shook his way up crux slab after Hickey declined sharp end (I'm a shiter, not a fighter).

Brian Hickey June 1983 Meets Log

Auchinstarry.

Thumbelena HVS 5a. George Christie, Brian Hickey.

George Christie demonstrated an all encompassing knowledge and skill in rock craft on this route. Each move was carefully thought out and delicately executed. Every runner placed with precision, and every comment instructive and made with a casual ease.

Brian Hickey demonstrated an equally encompassing knowledge of how to shake your way up a 100ft arete. No thought was given to each move, and every move was made with maximum effort and movement and minimum skill. Each runner was wrestled from its place, and every comment peppered with expletives.

Ah well...back to V.Diffs.

Brian Hickey June 1983 Meets Log

From March 1985 onwards, whenever it stopped raining!:

March '85: Kelvin Bridge - finally managed to do one traverse! Weather update so far: In March it rained a lot!!

April '85: Still raining! Visited Lazonby (Eden Vale, Cumbria). Al and Big M climbed **Merry Monk (HVS)**. "The best route on the crag" (guidebook quote). Alan Leary quote: "Crag wins 'Shit Heap of The Year Award'."

May '85: Didn't rain quite so much! Dunkeld: **High Performance (E3 6a)**, good dynamic fun.

June '85: Yes, still raining. Despite warnings from Wee Ian (of the Beeb) about imminent floods, Mark Worsley somehow persuaded Tony Bampot, Big Kev and myself to go to Skye! A fine cloudless sunset was observed, from inside the pub at Kyle of Lochalsh, raising false hopes. We had a run-in with some irate teuchter ferryman givin' us "heedrum hodrums" about parking in the wrong place, but finally we got 'over the sea to Skye'. Dropped into the pub at Carbost, for a few more hours. Hopes were still being raised by the still cloudless sky. However, by morning, with the mist hovering just above road level, all hopes of routes such as Vulcan Wall, Bastinado and something to do with gold coins, vanished. Despite this, one Kevin McGrath dragged me out in the pissin' rain up Coire Lagan, along Collie's Ledge and back down again (didn't even do any Munros!))! A quick confab, and soon we were going home. A total washout - all Mark Worsley's fault!

July '85: Still raining a lot.

August '85: Acting on information received, went south for 2 weeks. Pembroke (a fine place): St Govan's Head - **The Arrow (E1)** - is this the best E1 in the world? Gower Peninsula: nice place, shite climbing. Tremadog: **Vector (E2 6a)** - crucial undercuts on the ochre overhang, pissing wet, mental variation climbed. Rather hard!

It didn't rain down here quite so much.

September '85: An attempt on **Gladiator's Groove (HVS)** was aborted at 30ft due to the early arrival of winter. Definitely Alan Leary's fault. Should have

gone to Dumbarton Rock.

October '85: Ken Johnstone and Alan Leary had a fine 10 days climbing in Wales, via the Peak District, and climbed (amongst others):

Left Wall (E2 5c)* Llanberis

True Grip (E5 6a)** Llanberis

New Dimensions (E4)*** Pen Trwyn

* Denotes possibly the best pitch in the world!

** Denotes one despo route and Mountain Rescue Team members waiting at the car park for us.

*** Denotes another despo route, even with pulling on, clipping into, every peg, bolt, thread, etc. I was still dragged up it!

November '85: A gentle stroll up to Cairngorm summit from the top of the chairlift to bag my 7th Munro, then later on walked up A"Chailleach and Carn Sgulain in the Monadh Liath (rather boring) for Munros 8 and 9.

Alan Leary November 1985 Meets Log

August 1986: Dave Sanderson and Pat and 10⁹ midges - **Swastica**, Etive Slabs. Brill route, would be better with 50 bolts.

Winter 1986/87: Dave Sanderson and Graham McGill (mostly) - a few little routes on The Ben - **Green Gully**, **The Curtain**, **S.C.** (didn't think that was on The Ben), **Point Five**, **Glover's Chimney**, **Gardylloo Gully**, **Tower Ridge**, **Zero Gully**, **Orion Direct**, **Cresta Climb**, **Parallel B** (not The Ben either).

Perhaps Scotland has a little bit going for it despite being full of Scotsmen, whisky and haggises, and having a distinct lack of beautifully shiny BOLTS.

May 1987: Dave Sanderson, Richard Lewis and Iain McLellan went to Loudoun Hill. Iain dropped me off some horribly overhanging thing, stupid bastard. Suppose he is Scottish, after all. Probably doesn't know how to use a sticht plate. Also went to Dumbarton Rock, with Iain belaying so that I didn't fall off this time. A nasty man in a uniform threatened to call the Police. Obviously our climbing was a threat to the security of the NATO Alliance!

Dave Sanderson May 1987 Meets Log

Quote:

"That's the tightest hole I've ever squeezed through."

(John Porter, stuck in the exit hole of Crypt Route, Glen Coe).

July 1987 Meets Log

Before Alan Leary retired from climbing, the following routes were some of those ascended (a few were also descended!), 1985-87:

A fine stroll in t-shirts along the **Aonach Eagach Ridge (II)**. My Munro tally now at 11. Yes, I'm into double figures.

Failed on **Point Five** due to in situ ENGLISHMEN!

Ben Oodlay: **Ice Crew/Quartzvein Scoop (III)**. Rescue attended later when some punter fell from the top of Ramshead Gully.

The Ben: **Vanishing Gully (V)**, with Derek Austin - his second ice route!
Probably the best ice pitch in the world exists on this route.

Zero Gully (IV/V) - scary.

Kilsyth: **Fusion Direct (E2)** - a wee bit loose; **Think Of England (E1)** - yugh!

Cracked Arete (HVS) - terminal.

Lakes: Black Crag: **Prana (E3)** - great route, but don't do it in the pissin' rain.

Peak: Millstone: **Gt Portland St (HVS)** - only route I could find with holds.

Froggat: **Chequers Butty (HVS)** - another gritstone route with holds. Stoney:

Fe Fi Fo Fum (HVS/E2) - yugh!

Wales: Gogarath: **The Moon (E3)** - wow!

Alan Leary August 1987 Meets Log

22.8.87: G. Christie and A. Leary went up to the Bookil in search of dry rock - didn't find any, so went home.

29.8.87-30.8.87: G. Christie and A. Leary hit the Lakes! Went to find Eagle Crag with big things in mind, but after 2 hours of walking in we decided that we didn't really want to go there at all. Diverted to Bleak How Crag intending to do amazing things, but it was wet - so to save the day we went to Lower Falcon Crag and did **Interloper (E2.3)*** with many grunts. Next day went to Dow Crag and did **Pink Panther (E3.1)****

* Denotes leader who got lowered off umpteen times.

** Denotes climber who fell off seconding!!

George Christie August 1987 Meets Log

After letters of support from the public, Alan Leary started climbing (just a wee bit) again:

3.1.88: Wandered up the NE Ridge of Sgorr Bhan with Chris Roper and Martin Macrae.

13.2.88: Checked out new Fort Bill climbing wall. Watched Kenny McIntyre and some English punter do amazing things.

14.2.88: Went skiing with George Christie (an experience).

21.2.88: Got bored, so wandered down to Yorkshire for an afternoon, and visited the following:

Illkley: **Something (VS)**; **Something else (S)**.

Glen Shipley: Lots of things.

Goredale: Not a lot.

Malham: Even less.

In search of sun, sea, rock, bolts, beaches, naked women, Al nipped over to Spain for a week.

Alan Leary March 1988 Meets Log

"ROOTS" February 1989:

Chris Roper, Martin 'Skydiver' Macrae.

Broken Gully (Sneachda) III, NC (Lochan) I/II, Garadh Gully (Ben) II/III.

Excellent ice pitches.

Good free fall!!! He was on Nicaraguan aviation fuel!

Chris Roper February 1989 Hut Log

A new Hut rule: "If it's on the table (?), it's up for grabs - that includes 4 year old rum from Nicaragua."

Henry Hannah 19 February 1989 Hut Log

4-5 March 1989. Martin Collins, John Porter.

Walked up Garadh Gully and Gully 2 on Saturday with John. Bumped into Bonington. "How's it gaun, Martin?" says he.

"F— off, Chris!" says I.

North Face of the Pap on Sunday...dodgy.

Martin Collins 5 March 1989 Hut Log

6-8 March 1989. Joe Smith, Alastair McMillan.

Sgurr nam Fiannaidh and the Pap. Nice day. No mega routes! No bullshit! And we didn't even pinch anyone's Nicaraguan rum.

Alastair McMillan 8 March 1989 Hut Log

22-23 April 1989. Gordon Longmuir & Julia (from Madrid).

Gully No.3, Ben Nevis.

Turimos buen tienipo, pero la nieve estaba demesiado blanda sobre todo en la v'tima parte.

- Just ask Kenny for translation.

Julia (from Madrid) 23 April 1989 Hut Log

10 May 1989. Martin Collins.

Mighty crack. Topless dancers in the Onich Hotel on Friday night. Bradford chapter of Hells Angels took over...sheer utter mince. Polldubh on Saturday: Pandora and Repton Craggs...midges.

Martin Collins 10 May 1989 Hut Log

"Strong Drink":

See whin yiv goat dampness 'n yi canny give up smokin, f—s yi so it does

Poetry in the early hours by Jim Ferguson 30 July 1989 Hut Log

Fort Bill, 1-3 March 1990. Ron Renwick, Martin 'Flyer' Macrae.

Coffee - climbing wall - coffee - sauna - coffee - skiing - coffee - sauna - coffee - climbing wall - coffee - oh ay Martin had twenty pints as well, as per norm. I was not drinking, burnt Martin off the wall as per.

Ron Renwick 3 March 1990 Hut Log

Troafum her vel en erum ad hugsaum ad vera bara eina notl.

Jakk!

Ari Jokulsonn and guests (from Iceland) 19 June 1990 Hut Log

11.7.90:

Bill Williamson becomes the first Lomond Club member to fly off the Ben since Big M on Centurion pitch 2 circa 1983.

Rocket Ron becomes the first Lomond Club member to crash-land Bill Williamson's parapent into a field of cows.

Ron Renwick July 1990 Meets Log

Creag Dubh: **Wet Dreams E2.**

What a route! ***** Not enough stars in the sky to describe this.

First pitch Toshman burnt off Grant Farquhar (no bottle) on the Death Pitch, do or die, no joke. Second pitch whoopee over and over and overhangs for ever, don't stop for tea breaks.

Ron Renwick 12 August 1990 Hut Log/Meets Log

November 1990. Ron Renwick, Tam Barr, Al McIntosh, Wm Defoe.

The boys set off 6am to do battle with hard hats and spiky feet. Nutted a few SMC boys going by the CIC. **No.2 Gully** taking a spanking as the hard core of the LMC waded neck deep through plunderpussy on a solo ascent.

Wm Defoe 24 November 1990 Hut Log

18.1.91 D. Cameron, E. Cameron.

Wind tunnel and water permeability tests at Aonach Mor.

Dave Cameron 18 January 1991 Hut Log

We had a lovely time and think that the new carpet is super.

Plus, climbed some big mountains, some of which were scary. But the sun was nice and hot and we all got red. I found some nice sea shells too.

Lancaster University party 2 June 1991 Hut Log

11.8.91:

Went baggin' at Crianlarich.

√ √ √.

Geoff Emerson August 1991 Meets Log

March 1992:

Two Russian climbers from Moscow 8-9 March 1992 Hut Log

Поуилшча Бен Невис ио шурцсмччои
муилие ц сиусшшсб ио Кхкдор Дгсерцх-
уцрекм, Гаа-соб. Чеиобце Вешкоиеиаие
биуи илгуиесомшшзце. Илебхич б хцхшие
ЛМС, црекросцце усцобце.

11.4.92:

Popped in after the 60th Anniversary Dinner, on the way up to Knoydart. The meal was good, and Gayle's party a bit wibbly wobbly.

Quote of the week (heard in a bar in Mallaig):

"You can do a lot with a Scotsman if you get him young."

Martin Collins, Alison Booth 11 April 1992 Hut Log

30/31.5.92:

Splendid day's climbing on the East Face of Aonach Dubh. Midge free due to the light easterly breezes and the smell of Benny's feet!

Mega routes done: **Sir Chancelot E2 5b, 5c; Lady Jane E2 5b; and Freak Out E4 5c, 6a.**

Chuck Pettigrew, Benny McLaughlin 31 May 1992 Hut Log

16-17 July 1992 (Glasgow Fair Weekend):

Thursday night wet. Friday morning - wet! Three hours dry weather climbing at Polldubh. Friday night - wet.

There is a traditional Glasgow saying that "if it rains on Fair Friday then the next two weeks will be fine dry weather."

True to tradition we woke up on Saturday morning and it was pissing down! Went home.

Doug Short, John Stevenson 17 July 1992 Hut Log

Sat. 23.1.93 CIC Meet, Ben Nevis.

Ken Coates, Andrew Fellows.

Castle Ridge II.

The weather was foul. Gale force winds and snow at the top, avalanche conditions in every gully, but the ridge itself was OK. Straightforward except for a couple of rock steps. AF pronounced that he felt sick and that he was going to die* at about crux point of route, but soon recovered. About six hours on route! Summit at 4.30pm. Regained CIC at 7.30pm after strenuous efforts in the wind and meltwater.

[* This never happened to me before. Any explanations apart from that I'm a total wimp (too obvious!). AF.]

Ken Coates January 1993 Meets Log

Sunday 31 January 1993

Boomerang Gully, Stob Coire nan Lochan.

Kim Hawker and Steve Archibald.

Brilliant day out, with superb conditions. Route busier than the M8 at rush hour. Kim refused to go to the pub afterwards. Why, Kim, why?

Steve Archibald January 1993 Meets Log

13/14 February 1993:

Steve Archibald, John McLaughlin & Chuck Pettigrew.

Saturday 13 Feb: Coire an t-Sneachda, Cairngorms. Kamikaze McLaughlin inspects **Red Gully** and avoids rockfall (so do we). We move over to **The Runnell**. Archibald is coaxed into his first winter lead with McLaughlin coaching (!). Move on up the route. See verse 6, lines 1 and 2 of John Stevenson's Most Of The Day poem. Final pitch is epic and **The Runnell** becomes Grade II/IV. How many times can you torque at Grade II? Woooooeeeeeee!!!

Sunday 14 Feb: Same team in Coire Cas. McLaughlin puts up new route - Arse Over Tit - solo. Bloody good day's skiing. Nae climbing as nae ice.

Steve Archibald February 1993 Meets Log

28 February 1993:

John Ainsworth responsible for choosing **Crest Route** (Stob Coire nan Lochan) in an attempt to beat Robin Whitworth to a Grade IV ascent. Despite watching one climber struggling for over an hour on the second pitch, we decided to climb it anyway. After Ainsworth declared the second pitch to be too loose, McLaughlin decided to have a go (famous last words). 30 minutes later, another involuntary bungee jump to the great amusement of the spectating public, and a lower off to the belay stance. Ainsworth had to recover McLaughlin's ice-axe which was left trying to complete the route on its own.

PS. It was later discovered that this climb, although shown in the guidebook as Grade IV, enjoys the up-to-date grading of V,6 (new Scottish winter grading system). Moral: if climbing in Glen Coe, READ THE GUIDEBOOK!

John McLaughlin March 1993 Meets Log.

THE CLEARANCES

An account of the 3rd ascent of *The Clearances E3 5c*, on the North Face of Aonach Dubh in Glen Coe, in May 1977

by KEN JOHNSTONE

John Kerry and I had got a lift up to the 'Coe the previous night, and we were staying in a rather dingy but cheap alpine bunkhouse down beyond the Clachaig Inn. As we had no transport that weekend, a relatively nearby crag had much appeal. It had been dry for a few days, and the North Face of Aonach Dubh seemed a sensible option.

I had climbed Yo-Yo the previous year, and was strangely attracted by the prospect of another route on this impressive face. Flicking through my much annotated guidebook, I read about Tober, Cough, Yak, 19th Nervous Breakdown, and other unknown Scottish VS gems. I innocently suggested The Clearances. It was near Yo-Yo and should be good, and was unlikely to have been repeated since its first ascent the previous year.

The approach to these routes takes just over an hour and involves wading across the River Coe underneath the face then scrambling up towards the dark slit of Ossian's Cave. My laboured breathing betrayed that this was the first steep approach of the season. Panting up the ramp beyond Ossian's I was surprised to hear a pair of voices from above, and I was even more surprised to see that pair of climbers already on 'our' route. Astonishment was not too strong a term when, close on our heels, another pair arrived and announced The Clearances to be their objective too. We had expected to have the whole face to ourselves.

The Clearances had first been climbed by Ed Grindley and party nine months before, in August 1976, and rumours were later to fly around about controversial tactics used. It is certainly a most impressive route, soaring up to the ill-named Pleasant Terrace in two fearsome looking pitches.

The pair above already on the route were Murray Hamilton and Rab Anderson. They had failed on this first pitch of the route the previous week, and were up for another attempt. Its main feature is a long, tapering crack splitting the steep wall left of Yo-Yo. Rab fell off seconding as I coldly and stiffly started up the long rising traverse, the rapidly growing exposure reinforcing the spaced protection. Much higher up, a thin wall move leads you towards the main crack. As I stretched up, then a little further, a tiny foothold snapped! Only a wild grab stopped a long fall. The spectators were convinced I'd jumped for a hold.

A strangely located peg now offered welcome protection in a strenuous position, but the crack seemed so close that I ignored it - overdone ethics, perhaps? That crack does yield some runners but it is not easy. Up and up it rears, sustained and strenuous. How I wished for new EBs with decent edges. Thankfully, the last few moves looked OK, though steep, but the holds are rationed and my tired fingers groped desperately on the slab above. That finish

is a bit mean.

John came up eventually, then abseiled off - he'd had enough and didn't like the look of the next pitch. However, the pair behind us turned out to be Dave Cuthbertson and Willie Todd and, as it was, I was able to accompany them up the next pitch. Perhaps I wasn't really too disappointed, for this second pitch looked ferocious. A corner led to a huge roof. Dave led it - it was obviously hard. Willie went next but swung off under the roof, cursing loudly. It was definitely hard.

Now my turn came. Nervous moves on the left wall led to a very thin move even to reach the big roof. Wildly exposed bridging then led to a bold layback. What a route! Well done, Ed Grindley. The Pleasant Terrace above seemed quite aptly named after all.

Ken Johnstone, October 1992

THE WHITE HORSE INN

by LAWRENCE TRAVERS

Recently I decided to visit Crianlarich by train and walk to Ben More Farm. On the way my memory was recalling the many enjoyable summer and winter weekends spent in the area. This time, however, some changes were almost immediately apparent. Only three minutes from the station a spanking new and well-designed youth hostel stood surrounded by the familiar magnificent scenery. The railway timber yard was no longer in use. The old line from Killin through Glen Dochart, which was the link for the farms and crofts, had disappeared.

In the past, it was claimed, it was not unknown for the train to make an unscheduled stop at someone's back door! This was confirmed one Hogmanay when there was a large gathering of the locals at Ben More Farm. Someone shouted "There's the whistle of the goods train", whereupon some of the company left the house to greet the train driver and his fireman to give them their Ne'erday dram of 'a wee half', accompanied by many handshakes and greetings to send them cheerfully on their way. I often wondered how many other stops were made that night!

How did we as Lowlanders become part of that small community? For a number of weekends we had been camping not far above the farm, and as members of the Lomonds we had a reputation for leaving the camp site free of litter, including matchsticks! Any leftover foodstuff was kept for the hens and given to Mr Anderson, the farmer there, whom we always thanked for the use of the camp site before taking our leave.

In the early Fifties in Glasgow most of the outdoor fraternity would meet on a Friday evening in the cafe in Dundas Street, opposite the old Bus Station. There we would decide our venues and plans for the weekend. Usually we

caught the 4.15pm Oban bus from Buchanan Street since most of us worked a Saturday half-day.

In the month of November one year we decided on a return visit to Crianlarich with the intention of climbing Ben More. Darkness had fallen and there was a thick fog present as we boarded the bus at 4pm. By the time we reached Helensburgh we were astonished to find a clear sky and a full moon! On arrival at Crianlarich we stepped out into a white landscape where every tree and blade of grass was covered in hoar frost which sparkled diamond-like in the moonlight.

At Ben More Farm we called on John Anderson to let him know of our intention to camp. He suggested we use his hayloft above the stable, which we readily agreed to. In no time we were duly installed and the stoves were roaring away in preparation for supper which followed soon after. Peering over the edge of the floor some time later I was amazed to see below us a big white horse which, as Mr Anderson explained later when he called in to feed the horse some hot bran, needed extra warmth because it was suffering from a



Lawrie Travers, (second from right) and other members on the summit of Ben Nevis, c.1960.

Photo: Lawrie Travers.

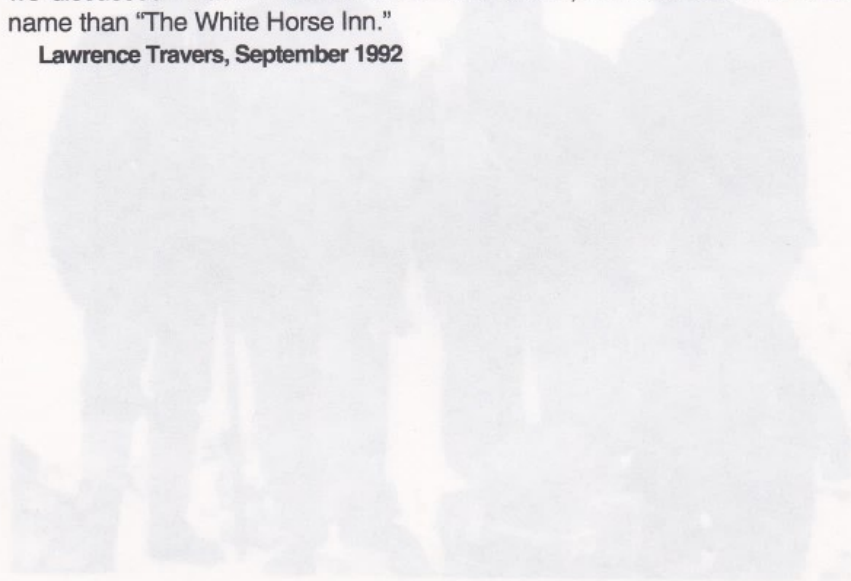
cold. After some chatter we settled down in our 'bug bags' for a good night's sleep, but this was not so easily achieved since our four legged friend below kept grunting, belching and farting for some considerable time before eventually settling down himself.

In the morning, following breakfast, I went out to assess the weather and found John breaking the ice on the water supply to his farm. It was a crispy, cold day with clear blue skies as we set out to climb Ben More. About halfway up the mountain we stopped to admire our surroundings. Some of the distant summits had taken on a delicate shade of pink as the sun rose higher above the horizon. On arrival at the summit we viewed the panorama of Ben Lomond, Lawers, Nevis, even Dumgoyne on the outskirts of Glasgow appearing above the smog of the city.

We sat for some time admiring this view, nibbling and enjoying apple slices dipped in snow. But bearing in mind the shortness of November days we soon made our way back down to the farm where we savoured a hot meal, as did our equine friend again who then repeated his gastronomic performance of the previous night! Nevertheless we slept well after a good laugh and general banter.

Next morning we called on John to thank him for the use of his hayloft and were more than pleased when he said we could use it any future time. We left our food scraps for the hens and began our journey homewards. On the bus we discussed what we would call our new 'doss', and concluded what better name than "The White Horse Inn."

Lawrence Travers, September 1992



Lawrence Travers (second from right) and other members on the summit of Ben Nevis in 1992.
Photo: Lawrence Travers

RELAXING HOLIDAYS

Epic routes in the Alps

by KEN JOHNSTONE

August 1980.

I left the Verdon Gorge to avoid more heat-induced thunderstorm-filled epics. Having motorcycled to Chamonix, I bumped into Tony Brindle at the campsite. He didn't have a climbing partner, so we agreed to team up for the Swiss Route on the Courtes, and we rushed to pack.

With seconds to spare we caught the last Grandes Montets chairlift, then tramped over to the Argentiere Hut. The face looked impressive. We had intended a bivi and an early start to be first on the route, then I suggested we could just start straightaway to save time.

The sun set as we set off at 9.30pm, and we passed the bergschrund at 11pm on a moonless night. We started soloing and never stopped! Headtorch climbing was an eerie experience, the exposure could only be sensed. Changing torch batteries halfway up was worrying. Some of the ice was steep for long sections. The most difficult climbing, which was slightly mixed, came higher up, followed by seemingly endless steep and unreliable snow. We finished directly, and sat at the summit, exhausted, just before 5.30am to wait for sunrise.

A few days later we tried the Frendo Spur. Difficult route-finding and some hard climbing with big boots and big sack proved interesting. At one point a gigantic slab lurched and completely jammed my belay. We reached a bivi ledge, only to find that the gas stove had turned on inside my sack, so cold food was followed by a dangerously stinking kip in a bleached white sleeping bag and little sleep for me.

The following morning we soloed up that striking long snow arete, but the nasty change-over to rock had us struggling in crampons, and wishing we had roped up. Awkward rock pitches above soon led to a soft snow finish onto the Midi ridge. We had planned to try the Rebuffat Route but lack of time chased us down, exhausted.

Next day we voted for a semi-rest day - a straightforward rock climb somewhere. We left late, on a long bike journey heading for the Amone Slab in Switzerland, travelling light in the late morning sunshine. At the route, a large waterfall was pouring down so we set off up the rock well to its right. One particular pitch high up on the climb remains etched in my memory. From a 'nothing' belay 150 feet of absolutely runnerless, sustained, atrociously flaky slab led to nothing. Tying slings to the rope gave me a few more feet. The very last inch and desperate fingers found the rusty remains of a peg hidden under the grit. Despite the lack of any ledges, this had to do. Tony was told not to fall.

Higher still, we moved left, crossed the waterfall and found solid rock and solid bolts. You don't climb the right-hand side - you wait until it's dry and you climb near the watercourse!

The descent was apparently straightforward, supposed to take forty minutes. One and a half hours later, at 10pm, darkness caught us still traversing a steep grass slope, EBs hopelessly unsafe, groping for hints of a path. Tony was wearing shorts, I little more. We belayed to a decaying tree stump and hung on that slope all night. Within minutes ants swarmed all over us in the pitch blackness and bit us!

Then thunder and lightning cracked and flashed and heralded steady, stinging rainfall and clinging mist. At first light, at 6am, we struggled on down, soaked and frozen with exposure setting in.

Tony screamed as a flash flood reached his waist in one stream bed and threatened to wash him down. Endless worrying, slithers on wet ground, and semi-abs with the likelihood of an impasse, all haunted us. Despair was close. The ascent and descent together had amounted to forty roped pitches.

It was a freezing journey back on the motorbike, and we had no food or Swiss money. The rain became so incredibly heavy we had to stop, and we just lay shivering at the roadside. Of course, the campsite was awash too.

The following day I set off home.

Routes: The Swiss Route on the Courtes, 800m Grade TD
 The Frendo Spur on the Aiguille du Midi, 1300m Grade V
 The Amone Slab, Val Ferret, Switzerland, 400m Grade TDSup

Ken Johnstone, October 1992

CAIRNGORM DAYS

by RICHARD BLACKMORE

I first visited the Cairngorms on a warm summer's day sixteen years ago. I had just spent the best part of a year hidden away in the libraries at Aberdeen University, and was becoming increasingly preoccupied with finishing a thesis of mind-boggling banality. Sean's invitation to climb Lochnagar was therefore accepted with the same alacrity as he accepted my offer of a drink. Sean knew a thing or two about theses, having written one himself on the subject of crows in the Irish Republic (he claimed never to have seen a single crow there throughout his entire research and I had no reason to doubt him...).

The memory of that day is locked forever in my mind, and while the details may be blurred by the passage of time there are images which flood back today as powerfully as ever. We drove in from Ballater along Glen Muick, and I can still smell the scent of the pine trees in the early morning sunshine and hear the opening bars of the Bothy Band's version of the Kesh Jig on the car stereo. A time and a place were thus fixed in my life, and have remained forever associated with a sense of total freedom.

We left the Spittal of Glen Muick and climbed Lochnagar's east flank with clear blue skies above and a day of pleasure ahead of us. A steady ascent, punctuated by a tutorial from Sean on the many kinds of heather which are found on the Scottish hills, brought us to a summit parched by drought. Lunch, a tin whistle duet, and a long rest in the warm sunshine passed the time splendidly, and we descended by the Glas Allt in high spirits. The long walk out along the side of Loch Muick lasted an eternity, but neither of us seemed to mind. It had been, above all, a day to savour and a day to remember.

It was another fourteen years before I was to return, having spent most of the intervening period working in the flatlands of East Anglia and in the docklands of South Wales. Apart from occasional winter excursions to Glen Coe, mountaineering stopped at Keswick. Scotland had remained, to borrow Tilman's phrase, a "blank on the map". However, the impending bankruptcy of my employer and the offer of a job in the City of Culture combined to change all that, and to open new climbing horizons. Serious exploration was called for, but somehow all my walking and climbing trips seemed to focus on the Southern Highlands and the west coast. The Cairngorms was still largely an unknown area to me, though no less attractive because of that. Mark was therefore pushing on an open door when he suggested a trip to Hell's Lum to climb Robin Smith's classic route Clean Sweep.

Plans made in the pub on a Wednesday night are frequently revised after listening to the Friday evening forecast on Radio Scotland, but on this occasion the Met Office was kind to us and we left Glasgow on a fine

September evening. The Lynwilg Hotel was reached in time for a couple of beers and the bunkhouse (now sadly closed) was deserted. The night was clear, and one could feel the frost creeping down from the hills into the valleys. At Mark's insistence, watches were set for what seemed like an absurdly early start, which appeared even more unnecessary when Saturday dawned grey and overcast. Having boosted the cholesterol and fat levels, and chipped a thick layer of ice from the car windscreen, we set off through freezing fog more in hope than in anticipation.

It soon became apparent that the fog was nothing more than an autumnal temperature inversion, and the level of anticipation rose quickly as we drove through the Rothiemurchus Forest in the early morning sunshine to reach a deserted car park at Coire Cas. The air temperature was just above freezing and the sky was a deepening blue without a cloud to be seen. Walking in a world of dreams up the Fiacail a' Choire Chais, I recalled many such mornings of exhilaration and clarity in the Alps but few in Britain. The ugliness of the ski lifts was left far behind as we looked out across the great sweep of the Northern Corries and a deserted plateau. Below us the Spey Valley remained shrouded in mist, and in the still air it seemed as though all the world was asleep. Feeling the sun's warmth on my face, I just knew that this was going to be a day of pure magic.

We cut across the plateau to descend beside the Allt Coire Domhain towards Loch Avon. At first sight, from above, the crags of Hell's Lum appeared strangely unimpressive, seeming rather broken and easy angled. It was only as we descended further that their full scale became clear, and by the time we reached their foot they towered high above us. We stepped back, trying to pick out the various lines from the guidebook and assess to what extent the obvious water seepages would affect them. Clean Sweep looked mercifully dry apart from its first pitch. Mark seemed keen to lead off and I saw no reason to object. A leisurely second breakfast satisfied the human stomach, but now it was time to feed the rat (who was beginning to work up one hell of an appetite). I lay back in the sun watching Mark tiptoeing past the damp patches, feeding out rope as the hungry rodent swallowed it up like so much spaghetti. Life felt remarkably good, and without a cloud in the sky it could only get better...

All too soon the spaghetti came to an end and it was time to get down to some rather more serious business. The only problem with being totally relaxed is that you start to believe that some magical karmic force will automatically guide your hands and feet to the right holds and that you will float up the rock on a tide of cosmic consciousness. It's like a cross between aboriginal dreamtiming and acid tripping, but unfortunately something called reality has a habit of intruding. In the case of the aborigine, the mind may be floating skywards but the body tends to be rooted on terra firma, while the tripper who seeks to emulate Icarus usually receives a short, sharp lesson in Newtonian physics.

Mark Gear on the third pitch of **Clean Sweep (VS 4c)**, Hell's Lum Crag, Cairngorms, in September 1990.
Photo: Richard Blackmore



The climbing equivalent of all this is having to wrestle for ten minutes to extract one of Mark Gear's bombproof nut placements, a task which would give even Sisyphus second thoughts. When you finally succeed you look up and see half a dozen more runners smiling down at you, waiting their turn. However, life does indeed get better, and leading through gives you the opportunity to place a few horrors of your own in revenge. Unfortunately my high residual level of karma led me to restrain this urge until setting up my own belay, with inevitable consequences.

The third pitch is unquestionably the jewel of the whole route, following a steep corner line with ample protection afforded by some delicious cracks. Whether you are leading or seconding, it is a pitch to take just a little bit longer over, to relish and enjoy every moment to the full. It is also highly photogenic, resulting in Mark being featured on the Club's 60th Anniversary Dinner menu leaflet as the face of climbing in the 1990s (see photo above) which might have surprised Robin Smith, were he still alive, since he put up this route in the early 1960s. After such a beautiful pitch it is hard for the rest of the climb not to become an anti-climax, but the fourth pitch does have its moments of interest. Only by the fifth pitch does the

climbing become downright scrappy, but by this stage one has the compensation both of extensive views over the Loch Avon basin, Beinn Mheadhoin and the Shelter Stone Crag, and of the certain knowledge that the top is only a rope's length away. When the effects of a second breakfast are beginning to wear off, and one's throat is beginning to feel dry, such knowledge is a powerful incentive to fast climbing. After topping out we returned to the sacks for lunch.

By this time the crag was starting to get crowded (another party had arrived). After inspection of the guidebook we set off to take a close look at Hell's Lump, a Jimmy Marshall route also from the early 1960s. At the time this didn't mean a great deal to me, though nowadays seeing his name on the first ascent list is like reading **appellation controlee** on a bottle of wine: some routes (and years) may have been better than others but all are likely to be enjoyable and worth sampling. Hell's Lump is certainly no exception to this rule, starting off with a thinly protected line of white quartz up an otherwise blank slab. However, the second pitch is the one to grab, with sustained and interesting climbing culminating in a wild layback under and around a square roof. A number 3 Friend stuffed hurriedly into a crack below the overhang gave considerable psychological comfort, with my respect for the first ascensionist much increased by the knowledge that he had no such advantages. Mark took the third pitch to leave me looking at two more overhangs on the final pitch. Where karma had previously failed, tiredness and hunger now prevailed in driving me up a straight line to the top, taking the overhangs as directly as possible. Belayed by the side of Deep Cut Chimney I looked up at the first few white clouds in the sky and watched their shadows passing over the surrounding hills. Life felt quite exceptionally good, but with supper in prospect it could still get better...

We cut down to the Shelter Stone for the night, finding evidence of only one other party in occupation and plenty of room to spare. A few brews on the terrace were followed by a three course meal to cordon Gear standards, during which the other party returned from a day spent on the Shelter Stone Crag. Their evening's enjoyment was sadly diminished by the accidental breakage of a full bottle of red wine, but having already drunk deeply from Smith and Marshall's 1961 vintage we felt no desire to drink more. Watching the candlelight flickering under the Stone and the shadows dancing across the walls was the perfect way to end a superb day. I have rarely slept as soundly or as long as I did that night.

Perhaps the next day could have been better still, but fortunately it wasn't. It was cold, wet and nasty, and in a strange kind of way thoroughly reassuring. Had it been otherwise one might have formed the opinion that the Cairngorms were the closest thing on earth to paradise, which of course would be totally mistaken...

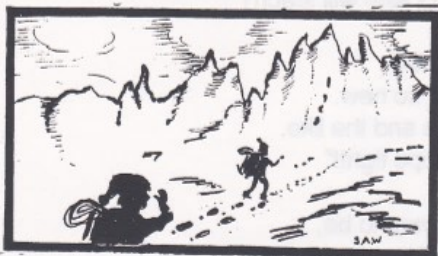
Richard Blackmore, October 1992

BUDDING LADY CLIMBERS

by SUSAN ANN WOOD

Lesson One (to budding lady climbers)

How to get heavy climbing gear up the mountain in winter!!



Lady:- "Hey, could you carry some of my gear?"

Gentleman:- "!! ! ?"

Lady:- "Or we'll not get much climbing done eh?"

Lady:- "Soon be up at the top, come on."

Gentlemen:- "Pech!! Pech!!"

Lady:- "I'll carry some of the gear down if you like...O.K....!!"



Lesson Two (to lady climbers)

How to get budding men climbers to climb with you in winter!!

Lady:- "Do fancy climbing this weekend?"

Gentleman:- "We'll. Eh...mmm!"

Lady:- "I'll take my car ..."

Lady:- "I'll drive and you can lead! O.K."

Gentlemen:- "Pick me up early, weather looks set to freeze.Hmmm!!"

Susan Ann Wood, November 1992

NOVICE NO MORE

by SUSAN ANN WOOD

Survive your first meeting when you come too early,
Confess you're a non-climbing hillwalking 'girlie';
You pass through the "Welcome to the L.M.C." speech,
Then you say "I'd like to climb - who will teach?"

Mix and chatter, go out with a few,
Look at the guidebooks, it's all so new.
Go to Auchinstarry, Craigmore and the like,
Top-rope, abseil, "Keep that rope tight!"

Just 'one of the boys' I really want to be,
But if things get tough: "Carry the rope for me?"
Staying at the Ling Hut below Liathach heights,
Pink slippers, hotwater bottle, cosy for the night.

I knew I'd arrived at the Club, you see,
When lads could sit and talk routes with me.
I have all the gear, the clothes and the rope;
Climbing multi pitches on mountains my hope.

Once I was out in winter in a Corrie,
Left my sack at the bottom - and was I sorry!
Snow was deep, "Why was everyone so slow?"
I was climbing up light!!! Now I know.

In the Cairngorm mountains winter climbing last year
I had an experience which caused me fear:
A big boulder came rolling towards me fast -
I watched, waited, and jumped clear at last.

Wish this winter will bring snow cool and crisp,
Ice axe and crampons, then weighing up the risks;
Achievable goals, awe-inspiring bounds,
I can't wait for the crunchy icy sounds.

Now I really feel at home in this Club,
Drinking with my pals I'm right in the hub,
Watching new folk who are hoping to be
Full-blooded members of the L.M.C.

Susan Ann Wood, October 1992

MOST OF THE DAY

by JOHN STEVENSON

Sacks, axes, crampons and fifty metre line,
We are heading for the high places, it's quarter to nine.
The skies are clear and picture card blue,
It's a fairytale setting, too good to be true.
Sweating and cursing, we are well on our way
High up now making the most of the day.

The routes are busy, there are queues at them all,
There are strange funny accents as Englishmen call.
"When you're ready, Julian" goes one English yell,
For thoughts like ours you go directly to Hell.
We lower our axes and go on our way
But oh what a way to make the most of the day.

Conditions are perfect and the snow ice sublime
So we are encouraged to go for a harder line (McLaughlin).
He's got the guidebook, it's only a Three (ha),
Dave and I are uncertain but we somehow agree.
The route looks steep, and ice points the way,
It looks like we will be taking most of the day.

Anchored to a prayer, the climbing then begins
And McLaughlin leads for his guidebook sins.
So on and up and higher we go
In our own little world of ice and snow.
Words are unspoken, there is little to say,
We are just making the most of a beautiful day.

Things get quite serious for an hour or so
As we freeze on our stances, with a big drop below.
There is time to think, as he is busy up above,
Are you there for the ego, or there for the love?
The answer isn't simple, it is hard to say,
I am sure we are just making the most of the day.

McLaughlin is back...with his abseil, delighted.
I am f***in' pleased...we won't be benighted!
He is down, knackered, and his arms are deed,
I am really f***in' pleased, it is my turn to lead.
The light is now going, turning steadily grey,
And still we are making the most of the day.

Up, over the cornice, we are on even ground
As the moon comes up and the sun goes down.
The wind is as keen as the moon is bright,
Standing on the top...it just seems right.
Gear stuffed in sacks, we are soon on our way,
Making the most of a beautiful day.

No need to hurry as moonshadow shines
And takes us down snow slopes on the easiest lines.
We descend towards blackness and the last of the snow,
It is Heaven above and Glen Coe below.
The beam of the torch shows the tortuous way
And we go down making the most of the day.

John Stevenson, February 1993

PERFECT PARALLELS

Ski mountaineering in the Austrian Alps

by **ELVYN HAIGH**

"Gosh, this is steep", we cursed, as the parallel ski tracks led forever onwards to converge at the forlorn infinity. We struggled under the weight of our rucksacks, equipment already pared to a minimum, as a party of local experts came zooming past, deftly sidestepping the icy ruts made by previous parties when the snow was softer. How nice it would be, we mused, to have the opportunity to ski down on this early morning snow rather than the more usual soft afternoon mush. However, the three of us, Willie Johnstone, Dave Cameron and I, skied on upwards, pushing off the skins stuck to the base of our skis, occasionally slipping back as the frozen snow became too steep and icy for the skins to grip. Rounding a corner, the early April sun broke out from behind a cliff and began to dazzle us, demanding that we stop and put on the glacier goggles. After a brief rest, we pushed on until the parallels ended in a chaotic jumble of marks on the col, above which was our destination for the day, the Dreiländerspitze (3197m).

So began Day Six of our tour on skis in the Silvretta Group of the Austrian Alps. The range offers attractive summer walking and climbing with peaks up to 3399m (the Fluchthorn) and a series of mountain huts which are linked by summer paths and winter ski routes, enabling a fine circuit to be followed. The seasons are generally April and May for ski-touring and July to September for summer activities. The other main summit in the region is Piz Buin (3312m), popular for ski tourists because it offers a fine ski to and from its base and a steep scramble up a rocky ridge, covered in snow and ice when we had ascended it the previous day.

Thankfully, we lowered our sacks on the col and planned our route. A steep slope led up to a shoulder on the ridge where a symbol on the map indicated there should be a ski dump. We fixed harscheisen to our skis, conscious to avoid any problems like those caused during winter climbing when fitting crampons is delayed. Icy tracks led in zig-zags through deep snow up the slope to the shoulder, where we left our skis with the others already there. We scrambled up the ridge to the first summit, about 100m higher. The gap to the cross on the second summit looked forbidding, comprising a narrow snow and rock arete, but was easily traversed, the main difficulty being the negotiation of other people also making the attempt and their criss-crossing ropes! After admiring the views from this central peak in the region, our own rope came into use for safeguarding our descent to the skis. We decided against using it when skiing back to the col, as there were no crevasses apparent. We had previously practiced roped skiing on the pistes in Glen Coe, to the great amusement of the other skiers, and not insignificant danger to them. Planning our route down with or without rope, we did not fancy the descent - steep, rutted soft snow where a fall would probably be dangerous, not so much for the

long slide to the glacier below, but for the crampons, harscheisen and ice axe dangling from each of our harnesses!

The route to the Jamtal Hut, where we planned to spend the night, took us on a seven kilometre descent on mixed terrain. The first section on a glacier was thankfully of shallow angle and apparently crevasse free but covered in the heavy snow so difficult to turn in. A steady run brought us to the second section, steep rutted frozen snow followed by another schuss and an annoying final ascent to the hut.

The warden gave us a warm welcome, and after relaxing outside in the sun with a beer, we returned to find our table identified by a UK flag and a notice to say that we were representing Great Britain. Fame at last!

The following day, we went on a short tour which had been recommended to us by one of the hut occupants for the long return descent to the hut. However, that also meant a long four hours of skinning upwards to the ridge, occasionally using harscheisen. Since there were no summits within easy reach, we enjoyed the views from the ridge for an hour before putting our skis on again and finding that the frozen snow on our ascent had become substantially softer but still provided enjoyable skiing. The one and a half hour return was over far too soon.



Willie Johnstone and Dave Cameron ski mountaineering above the Jamtal Hutte, Silvretta Alps, Austria, in March 1992.

Photo: Elvyn Haigh

During our second night in the hut, we planned our route for the following day to the Heidelberger Hut. A possible option included an ascent of the Fluchthorn, but since this would involve a long climb on foot, the warden recommended a ski traverse of Piz Tasna. We decided to set off in the direction of the latter which was along a valley for about six kilometres followed by an ascent to the col. An icy blast of wind hit us. Breite Krone (3079m) beckoned from close by, since we would be able to ski up and back down without sacks. Such an opportunity was not to be missed. However, rocks jutting through the ice reminded us of touring in lean conditions in Scotland. The summit gave superb views of our past few days touring and the chance to assess the complicated way up Piz Tansa.

After returning to the col, progress was down a gentle glacier covered in porridgy snow. In search of better conditions, we opted for a narrow channel at the edge of the glacier which turned into a gully full of deep powder snow, blown off the cliffs above. The temptation to emulate the locals' short radius parallel turns was too great, the result was equally predictable, and the lesson confirmed that it is difficult standing up after a fall in powder with a heavy rucksack!

By now, Piz Tasna appeared far too remote, and an alternative presented itself: we could leave our kit on the snow and ascend Piz Laver instead. This was easily accomplished on ski and on foot. From the top, a pleasant run took us back to our kit followed by a long schuss to the Heidelberger Hut.

The accommodation here was on the traditional *matratzenlager* because the hut was so full. A feature for many people to stay here is that transport can be arranged by Rat-track from the valley to the hut, which makes the area attractive for weekenders.

Our final day on the tour began with a steep ascent of Piz Davo Sanse (2792m) on a perfect day with retrospective views of stunning clarity. The summit was left by a long run down a north facing gully, still searching for those neat parallel turns in the powder snow which, as usual for myself, ended in the usual chaos. A mile of ascent led to a col on the Austrian/Italian border on the verge of downhill skiing territory. Lone skiers were struggling up the valley before us, determined for their off-piste treats. A huge avalanche had occurred along one side of the valley, deliberately, we hoped, for we estimated the headwall at the cornice to be at least a couple of hundred metres long.

Still skiing northwards, the valley was steep and narrow, gradually flattening out and route-finding was concentrated on avoiding gullies and uphill sections. A run past the avalanche led to the icy pistes and fast negotiations through the contrasting crowds soon had our leg muscles screaming despite the fitness gained during the last week. However, schussing along the tracks to Ischgl, it was so pleasant to leave the bustle briefly behind and even more rewarding to sit behind a glass of local brew in our hotel back at the starting point in Landeck.

The weather and conditions on the tour had favoured us. This particular trip

had been proceeded by heavy snow, and continuing low cloud had almost caused us to delay departure. We wondered whether our decision was correct when our approach to the first hut was along a valley scarred with fresh avalanches, when one came down close on our heels and when the cloud obscured the hut. From then on, conditions improved, even though we were skiing for two days with difficult lighting in which the lie of the land could not be determined except by feeling it through the skis.

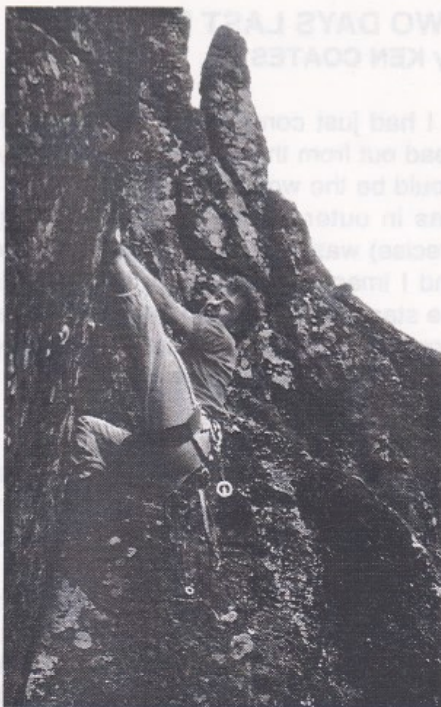
We envied the locals' ability to adapt to the adverse skiing conditions. For example, the books all say lean forwards, the experts seem to do so, but when skiing with a rucksack, no matter how much we seemed to lean forwards, any action photographs all showed us leaning back. So perhaps that is why the parallel turns become wider and wider and the safety snowplough was regularly in use. And so the incentive grew for a day on piste basking in the glorious sunshine to which we had become accustomed.

The following day found us sat in the cafe in St. Anton, the premier ski resort in the region, staring out of the window at the rain teeming down outside. We summed up all our courage, decided that this constituted normal Scottish conditions and set off up in the rack railway and chair as far as we could into the cloud and snow. On the first run Dave delighted in the freedom of skiing without a rucksack, demonstrating his best parallels down the mogulled slope. We groped our way down a red run, up some chair, down another red run and then a blue run, until we found ourselves separated but not totally lost in a blizzard which was gradually worsening. Sense prevailed, the hill was abandoned and we met again by prior arrangement in case of such an eventually, and the debate continued all the way home about the merits of uphill and downhill skiing.

During the winter of 1992 there was no skiing of any reasonable quality to be had in Scotland due to the mild weather, and the Alps had much more to offer, both ski-touring and downhill skiing. The winter of 1993 is forecast to start with great blizzards in the Highlands, but with less optimism for the Alps. Plans are presently being made for the next skiing trips but, we wonder, will that search for those perfect parallels be uphill or downhill?

Elvyn Haigh, February 1993

Martin Collins on **The Hand Traverse (VS 4c)**,
Loudoun Hill, May 1989,
Photo: Richard A. Napier



GREEN FIELDS

by **MARTIN COLLINS**

Self-exiled from my own country
So let me later mourn
The green fields once surrounding
The house where I was born

Green fields now lost forever
Burning in memory for me
But a hundred houses crowding
Where one house used to be

I've gone to many places
I've travelled much around
But no such green oasis
As this have I since found

But fixed in time forever
Which I no more shall see
Are green fields still surrounding
The boy that once was me

Martin Collins, December 1993

TWO DAYS LAST SUMMER

by KEN COATES

I had just come round from a restless doze, and foolishly I stuck my head out from the confines of the bivvy bag. Dave had said that waking up would be the worst moment and, well, he was right. It seemed as though I was in outer space. Far, far below (about 8,000ft further below to be precise) was a glowing mass of orange. Courmayeur, Italy. It was 2.30am and I imagined everybody down there would be asleep. Above my head the stars shone and the dark silhouettes of the Jorasses, Tacul and Maudit loomed. While people down in Italy slept the mountains up here were alive and active. The cold air crackled and huge unseen masses tumbled and crashed about us.

It had been an uncomfortable night. We were perched on a pile of loose rocks and my headstone wobbled every time Dave moved his feet. Why hadn't I bothered to tie myself in? I withdrew into my sleeping bag and tried to convince myself that here, just below 4,000m on the Brenva Spur, we were safe.

He frowned. "No." A straight answer, I suppose. All that I had done was to ask the man behind the desk about the conditions on the Brenva Spur. The Office de la Haute Montagne were being cautious when it came to giving out information to tourists. Judging by his full and detailed response he clearly didn't think that we should attempt the route, or probably any other route for that matter.

Back at the campsite I told Dave the news. "Gee, naa. I don't think they're right," he said, leaning back into the shade. "Let's try it anyway."

I replied cautiously: "Er, OK."

Coffee and a complicated discussion about freezing levels followed. Dave, a quiet American, used to be a mountain guide in Washington state and now lived in Colorado, so he should know about these things. One day maybe I'd understand too. We decided that if we split the route into two and bivvied then we could tackle the upper snows in the early morning. Secretly I was glad.

An early cable car had left us standing in thick swirling cloud. After much hesitation we crossed the Valee Blanche and descended behind the Tacul. Routes such as the Gervasutti Couloir, the Pillar, the Supercouloir, were suddenly in front of me, real and not just words in a book. As I struggled with this sight it seemed strange that hundreds of metres below our feet lorries stuffed with sheep and coach loads of tourists from Essex would be speeding through the Mont Blanc Tunnel oblivious to this grandeur.

We continued to traverse, passing the Pyramide du Tacul, Pointe Adolphe Rey and the Grand Capucin. Huge spires of red granite which already, at our reasonably early hour, had parties in impossibly high and desperate positions. The Capucin and the Tour Ronde mark the entrance

to a large and wonderful snow-filled bowl, the rear wall formed by the Arete de la Brenva or Frontier Ridge. To reach the Brenva Glacier and our route we would have to cross that ridge. A wide couloir led from the glacier up to the Col du Trident. It looked steep. Just above the col in a very exposed position was a tin shack - the Trident Hut. This is the usual start for all of the Brenva routes.

At the foot of the couloir I suggested to Dave that we should rope up. "Na, it'll be OK. You'll only fall into the schrund anyway." I pretended to assess the situation. "Er, OK." He knows best, I thought. And besides, he was probably right. I could do this. I launched out first. A powdery, loose snow ledge led up left onto the main face and then slowly I worked my way upwards on front points, struggling with my blunt Curver axes. Dave's Colorado ice experience became obvious as he sped skywards, showering me with ice and spindrift.

The col revealed the most awesome panorama. In front of us now appeared the Brenva Face. The huge seracs above the vast South East Face of Mont Maudit filled the air with the sounds of falling rubble and debris. Through the clouds we could see the Brenva Spur curving up to the main face, rock and then snow. To the left was the massive Brenva Face with classic lines such as the Red Sentenel and Route Major, and finally the Peuterey Ridge.

The descent from the Trident Hut to the Brenva Glacier was straightforward if not pleasant in the midday soft snow. A wide contour round took us across the glacier, below the Spur to the snows beneath the Col Moore. The bergschrund here looked quite imposing. Dave fell partway in. Lunges across the gap produced comic deluges of soft powder from above. Eventually Dave managed to haul up an icy overhanging bulge and give me a top rope. I swam up a more direct-looking approach line. Five minutes later saw us at the Col Moore.

We unroped - Dave's preferred style. Here we were at last on the Brenva Spur. The mist was swirling in, lending a Scottish winter feel to our situation. The ridge now was a series of buttresses which you mostly turned on the left by means of traverses across loose mud and gravel. Dave moved easily and was fast. I took my time. At one point we contoured too far left, encouraged by the presence of solid rock, and found ourselves under a strenuous overhang with tattered in situ gear. The guidebook, we found, advised us not to go too far left. We roped up and I was happy to aid this move by standing in an old sling.

The crest of the ridge now became more exposed with rock ribs interspersed between snow patches. Dave sped off up towards the top of the rocks where we could see that the Spur abutted the Brenva Face. Above, a snow rib ran for possibly 400m up to huge seracs. By the time I had reached the top of the rocks Dave was ready with his bivvy gear strewn across the final outcrop.

We were roused into action by the approaching headtorches. A couple of people soloed past us as we stretched and fumbled in the dark. It was about 3am and too cold to sleep. Frost had formed on my bivvy bag. Unusually, I was packed and away first. After a short slope the snow levelled out to form a narrow ridge which progressively became sharper. Each side of the crest swept away down into unseen depths beyond the range of my headtorch beam. I had my arms outstretched and was grateful that it was dark, my sense of exposure being only slightly eased.

After a while a steep snow slope reared up, the angle low enough to front-point without being too strenuous. Dave wasn't far behind me now so I carried on upwards.

At first things went well, just a case of moving up a few steps and then resting. The angle imperceptibly increased and patches of ice started to appear. I found myself approaching the first of the seracs. By now it was steep, icy and my Curver axes were difficult to place and even harder to extract. With immaculate timing the battery in my headtorch suddenly gave up and plunged me into darkness. I began to feel just a bit concerned. Dave misunderstood my calls as advice and switched off his headtorch as well. In the dim light sparks were flying as I struggled to gain secure placements.

Gradually the angle eased and we finally re-united at a sort of col where enormous blue seracs rose up on the left, blocking any upward progress. We placed a screw and surveyed the scene. The most obvious line, apart from upwards, was a traverse right, working underneath the main ice bulges and down into a hollow. We couldn't see the way beyond. Dave led off along this traverse, placing a screw at about midway. Eventually he crossed the hollow and peered around the corner. Now it was my turn. Dave was patient and made no comment when I finally reached him, frustrated and exhausted.

The view confirmed that we had cracked the route. We had now reached the snows which rose up to a plateau at about 4500m. The plateau, a wide level stretch between the Mur de la Cote and the final 300m climb to the summit of Mont Blanc, was featureless and covered in thick cloud. We struggled to stand, breathless from the altitude and the force of the wind. I checked my watch: 7.30am.

We sat on our sacks, relieved to be back on easier ground and amongst people. We talked about the summit, but I couldn't really tell if Dave wanted to go for it or not. We were both being too polite. Suddenly, doing anything in this screaming wind seemed senseless. Sacks on. We were on our way down. And down.

The corridor route led steeply onto the Grand Plateau where we joined the hordes of people trudging in shuffling lines, as though prisoners in a chain-gang, up and down the Grands Mulets route. By now the sun was blazing down and the endless descent numbed the mind and weakened

our limbs. Incredibly, the numbers of feet had worn a trench in the glacier. No need for route finding now. We only had the Bossons to negotiate and then we would be back in the real world with warm rock, grass and cable cars. A world of tourists, ice cream and cold beer. Only the Bossons to cross...

Ken Coates, March 1993

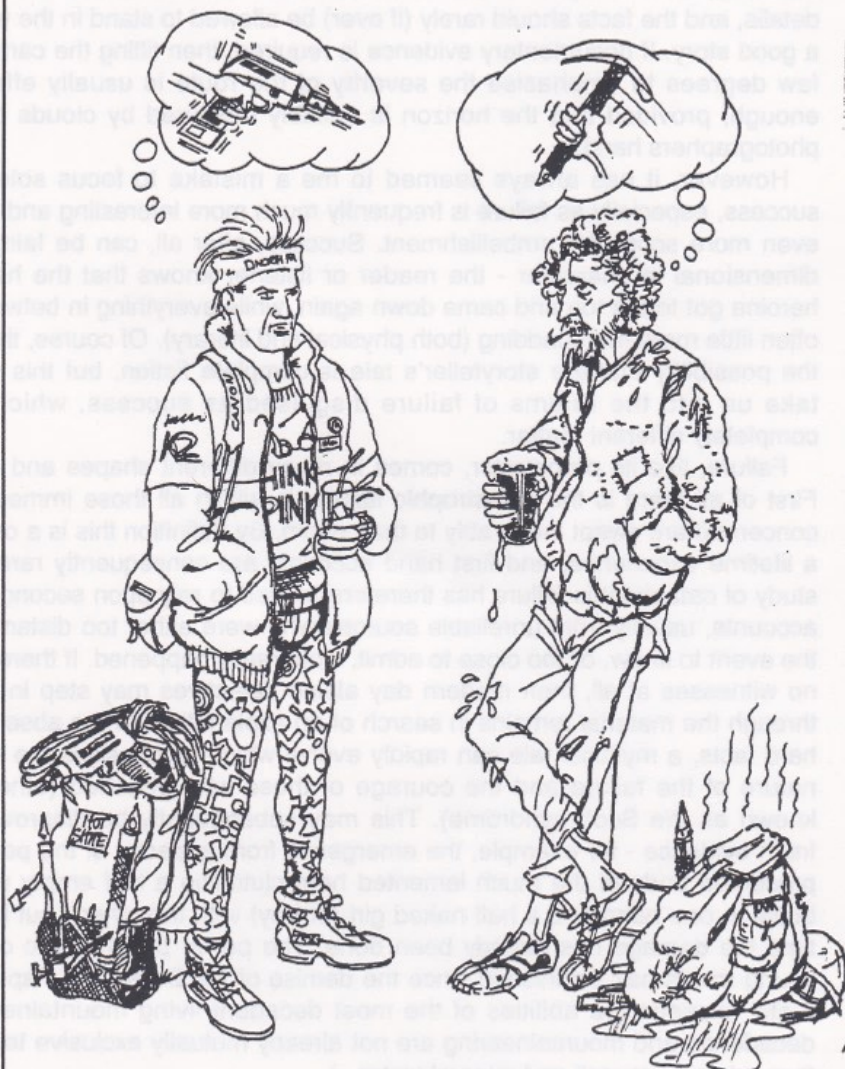


THE OFF-WIDTH VIEW

by GARRY THOMAS

WHO WAS THE SILLY
B—— WHO SAID IT
GETS BETTER ONCE
YOUR COMMITTED?





Garry Thomas, June 1993

IN PRAISE OF FAILURE

by RICHARD BLACKMORE

Like most people, mountaineers enjoy talking about their achievements - of summits climbed, difficulties overcome, and ambitions fulfilled. It is, quite naturally, common practice to embellish the truth with a few additional details, and the facts should rarely (if ever) be allowed to stand in the way of a good story. If documentary evidence is required, then tilting the camera a few degrees to emphasise the severity of the route is usually effective enough, provided that the horizon is suitably obscured by clouds or the photographers hand.

However, it has always seemed to me a mistake to focus solely on success, especially as **failure** is frequently much more interesting and offers even more scope for embellishment. Success, after all, can be fairly one dimensional in character - the reader or listener knows that the hero or heroine got to the top and came down again, while everything in between is often little more than padding (both physical and literary). Of course, there is the possibility that the storyteller's tale is complete fiction, but this would take us into the realms of failure disguised as success, which is a completely different matter.

Failure, like its perpetrator, comes in many different shapes and sizes. First of all there is the **catastrophic failure**, in which all those immediately concerned are swept inexorably to their doom. By definition this is a once in a lifetime experience, and first hand accounts are consequently rare. The study of catastrophic failure has therefore tended to rely upon second hand accounts, usually from unreliable sources who were either too distant from the event to know, or too close to admit, what really happened. If there were no witnesses at all, then modern day alpine detectives may step in to sift through the material remains in search of an explanation. In the absence of hard facts, a mythical tale can rapidly evolve which emphasises the heroic nature of the failure and the courage of those who perished (otherwise known as the Scott syndrome). This may subsequently be disproved by fresh evidence - for example, the emergence from a glacier of the perfectly preserved body of the much lamented hero clutching a half empty whisky bottle in one hand and a half naked girl (or boy) with the other - but by this time the damage has already been done. The power of a myth to corrupt young minds has diminished since the demise of the Boys Own Paper, but it still exceeds the abilities of the most decadent living mountaineers (if decadence and mountaineering are not already mutually exclusive terms in these days of muesli and mineral water...).

Closely related to the catastrophic failure is the **epic failure**, the principal difference between the two being that at least one person must survive an epic failure and live to tell the tale. The annals of mountaineering history are full of accounts of such failures, more than half of which seem to have

involved Walter Bonatti, although more recently Joe Simpson has made a serious takeover bid for Bonatti's role. There is, of course, no doubt that a good epic has always been an essential feature of any serious mountaineer's cv. The most important ingredient of an epic is the weather, which invariably starts bright and clear then deteriorates suddenly and unexpectedly just as the hero's are committed to the route. At this point a number of variations are possible - the abseil rope is suddenly discovered to be missing, a belay ledge collapses, or the strong man of the party reveals his secret passion for Kylie Minogue or (even worse) Jason Donovan. The struggle then begins as the party battle their way through white outs, hurricane force winds and freezing temperatures in their fight to survive. Minogue is rapidly replaced by quadrophonic Wagner with the volume control set firmly on maximum. The quality of the epic is directly related to the length of time taken over the retreat - for Scotland ten hours would be very respectable, but alpine retreats must extend over days to merit serious consideration. As for the Himalaya, you now need to have taken at least one week to get off the hill, preferably with an enforced detour through two neighbouring countries, before you can be sure of recognition. Such is the effect of inflation upon the currency of mountaineering dreams...

With mountaineering becoming increasingly professionalised, and with sponsorship for future expeditions becoming dependent to a great extent upon the success of previous trips, it is perhaps inevitable that some mountaineers will resort to subterfuge in their attempt to turn failure into success. This unhappy problem of **disguised failure** is certainly not new, and allegations of cheating are probably as old as the sport itself. At club level one soon learns to recognise the exaggerated claims of those, usually approaching middle age, whose ability to sink a pint is no longer matched by their ability to complete a route. It is well known that similarly exaggerated claims made by spotty teenagers have an unfortunate tendency to be based on reality... This can perhaps be dismissed as being of little consequence, but at the top levels of the sport matters are rather different. When an exhausted western mountaineer is alleged to have paid a sherpa to put on his clothes, climb to the top of an 8,000m peak, and have a photograph taken so that he himself can claim the summit (and satisfy his sponsor), the problem enters an entirely different dimension. Solo mountaineers are particularly susceptible to allegations of cheating because, by definition, no-one else was present to corroborate their story. Cameras have an awkward tendency to freeze up at high altitude, and setting up an acceptably good time-lapse photograph with overmits on each hand would surely be difficult enough for Lord Snowden in his studio, let alone an exhausted mountaineer in a howling gale. Mountaineering requires a degree of trust in one's companions, and in such circumstances it is wise to give those suspected the benefit of any doubt unless the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming.



Richard Blackmore leading the corner crack of **Eagle Front (VS 4c)**, Eagle Crag, Lake District, August 1991. **Photo: Mark Gear.**

How should an ordinary club climber learn to make a start in this increasingly competitive world of failure? A simple **ignominious failure** has much to recommend it and can be easily achieved by almost anyone. For example, the failure to get out of bed in the morning will be familiar to many Lomond Club members, especially after a session in the Onich Hotel the night before. The failure to find your way back to the Hut from the Hotel bar should not be attempted by beginners, unless adequately supervised by a member of the opposite sex. Assuming that breakfast can be safely negotiated, the next best ploy is the failure to start the car. Push starts in the

Hotel car park beside the Hut could result in an inattentive driver floating away down Loch Linnhie, so caution must be exercised there.

Once on the road, try holding the map upside down (or just use a road atlas of Australia) and see if you can guide the semi-comatose driver in completely the wrong direction. If this doesn't work then advanced methods may have to be employed, and discovering as you unload the gear that your boots and crampons are still back in the Hut is usually effective. Nepalese porters may climb glaciers in bare feet and trainers, but the snow is much colder here in Scotland and traditional safety precautions must of course be observed. When you have actually set foot on the hill the possibilities are limited only by your imagination. Navigational error is a frequent hazard, especially those who rely upon a road atlas to guide them to the top of the Cairngorm plateau, and with a little luck you may end up on completely the wrong summit. Even film stars experience this latter problem - two heroic individuals struggling to the top of what they thought was K2 must have been somewhat miffed (or perhaps relieved) to discover that they had actually climbed some insignificant little pimple in Alaska!

Assuming your navigation is good, then the best excuses for failure are probably bad snow conditions/ice axe fell down the gully/dehydration/sunstroke/midge attack/outbreak of plague/outbreak of plague of midges/mortar bombing by insurgent guerrillas/party of Presbyterian evangelists spotted ahead/last orders about to be called, (rarely applicable in Scotland) marauding mutant sheep with three heads, all depending on season, country, geo-political conditions, and your taste in perception-enhancing intoxicants. When all else fails, then you may as a last resort actually have to admit the truth, which is generally that you were either too tired or simply not good enough to continue. For example, a late night drive up from Glasgow combined with a 4am start from the Hut next morning to beat the forecast bad weather, and rucksacks full of ropes, axes and other useless ironmongery, should all be sufficient to ensure a properly ignominious failure on Ben Nevis; but sitting back in the Onich Hotel by lunchtime, drinking Guinness and watching the rain fall (a common occurrence, as many Hut regulars know), does at least allow you to enjoy your failure to the full.

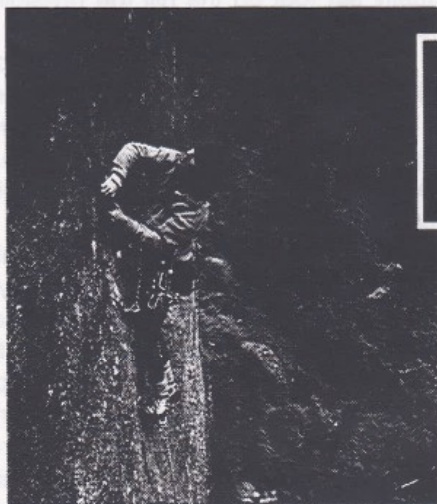
As the Lomond Mountaineering Club celebrates its 60th Anniversary, there will be many memorable days, both of success and of failure, to look back on. However, one failure must rank head and shoulders above all others - the simple and enduring failure of the Club and its members to take either themselves or their mountains too seriously. For this we should be well and truly grateful as the Club looks forward to another 60 years in the hills.

Richard Blackmore, October 1992

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